10¢

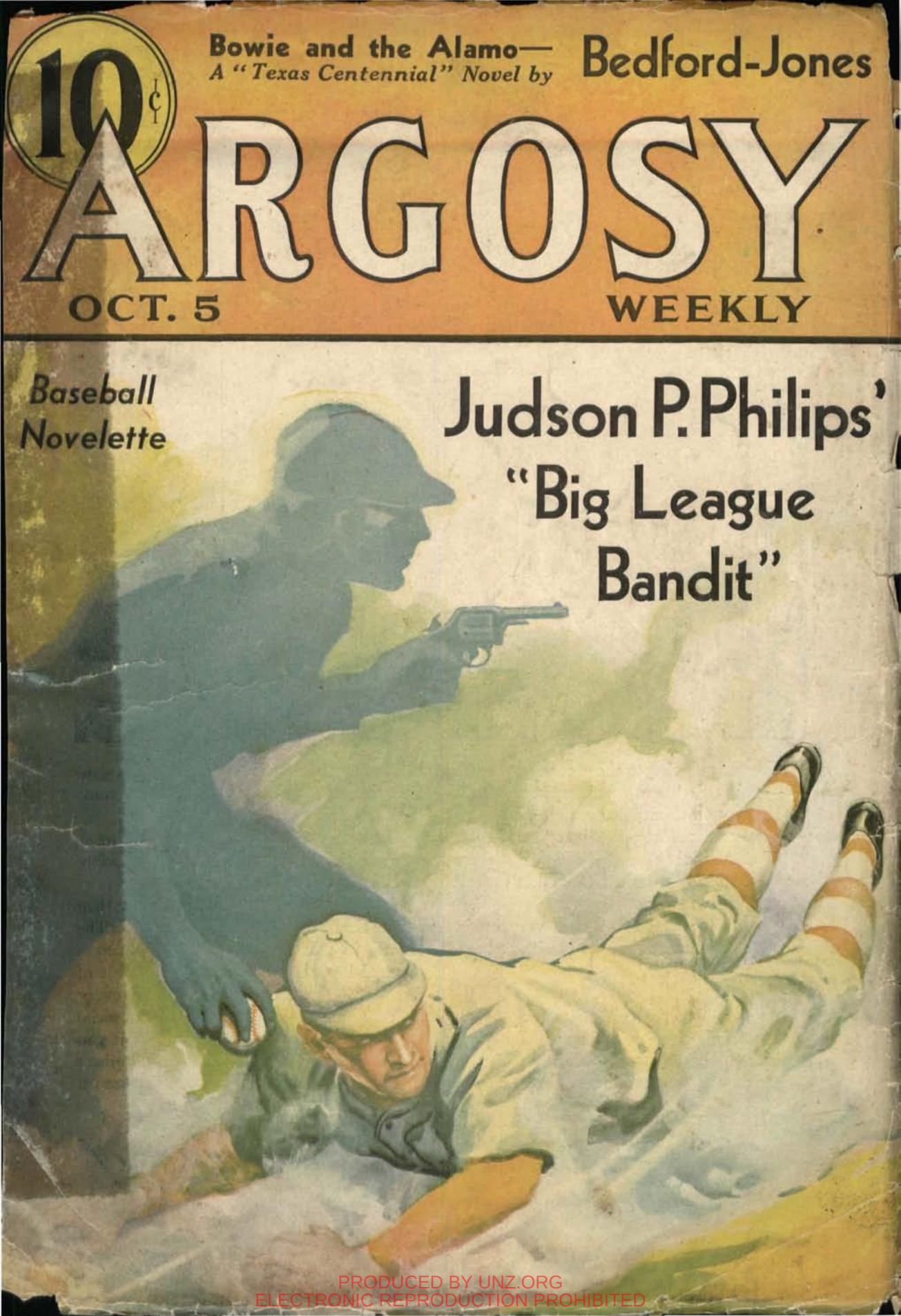
Bowie and the Alamo—
A "Texas Centennial" Novel by **Bedford-Jones**

ARGOSY

OCT. 5 WEEKLY

Baseball Novelette

Judson P. Philips' "Big League Bandit"



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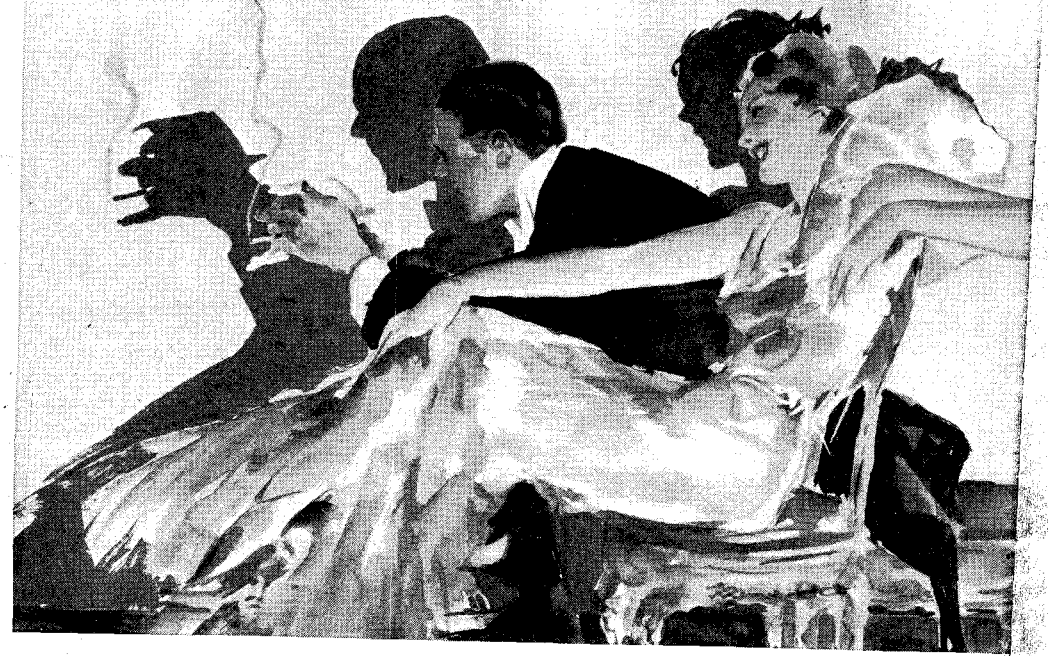
"That's the PEST I used to be!"



HE was referring to the grotesque picture that the shadow made upon the wall. "I shudder to think what a nuisance I was —how I almost lost you," he added.

"You certainly did," she laughed, "there was a time when I thought I couldn't stand you another minute."

"And if I hadn't taken that very broad hint you gave me, I'd never be sitting here, your husband-to-be."

* * *

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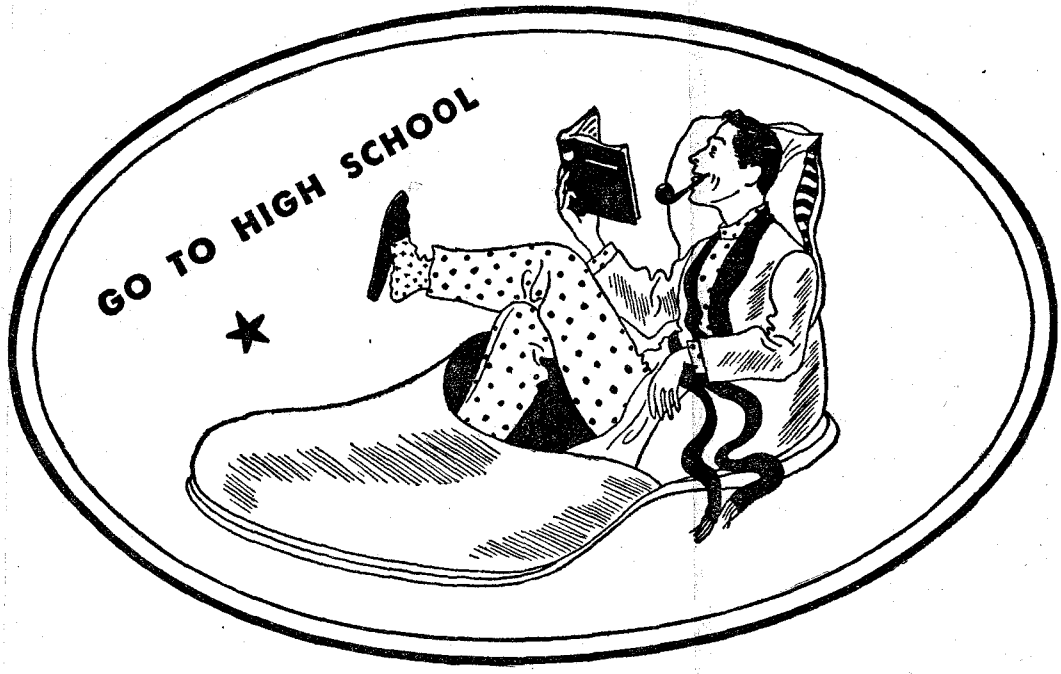

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ARGOSY

Action Stories of Every Variety

Volume 259 CONTENTS FOR OCTOBER 5, 1935 Number 1

SERIALS

Bowie Knife (Six Parts—Part I) . . . . . H. Bedford-Jones 30
Frontier Texas in the days of Davy Crockett

Half-Million Murder (Two Parts—Conclusion) Allan Vaughan Elston 62
Tom Eagle, Cherokee man-hunter, and a Jersey mystery

The Sheriff of Tonto Town (Six Parts—Part IV) . . W. C. Tuttle 82
Henry lays down the law in an Arizona feud

The Dew of Heaven (Six Parts—Part V) . . . George Challis 122
Daring pirates of the Spanish Main

COMPLETE STORIES

Big League Bandit (Novelette) . . . . . Judson P. Philips 6
A ball player fights his past

Beaver Moon (Short Story) . . . . . Kenneth Gilbert 52
Two beavers in a fight to the finish

Men of Daring (True Story in Pictures) . . . . Stookie Allen 60
Jean Ellrich, adventurer and sharkologist

Swamp Rat (Short Story) . . . . . Charles T. Jackson 98
Treachery in the Louisiana swamp lands

Strange Brethren (Short Story) . . . . William Merriam Rouse 106
An iron master's war on Lake Champlain

OTHER FEATURES

Wonders of the World—No. 40 . . . . . Alfred George 81
"Queen of roads"

The Lost Blarney Stone . . . . . J. W. Holden 29

New Uses for X-Rays . . . . . Delos White 59

The Most Trodden Bridge . . . . . James Arthur 80

Explosions by Sea Air . . . . . Rutherford Robinson 97

The Men Who Make the Argosy—Judson P. Philips 137

Argonotes 140

Looking Ahead! 143

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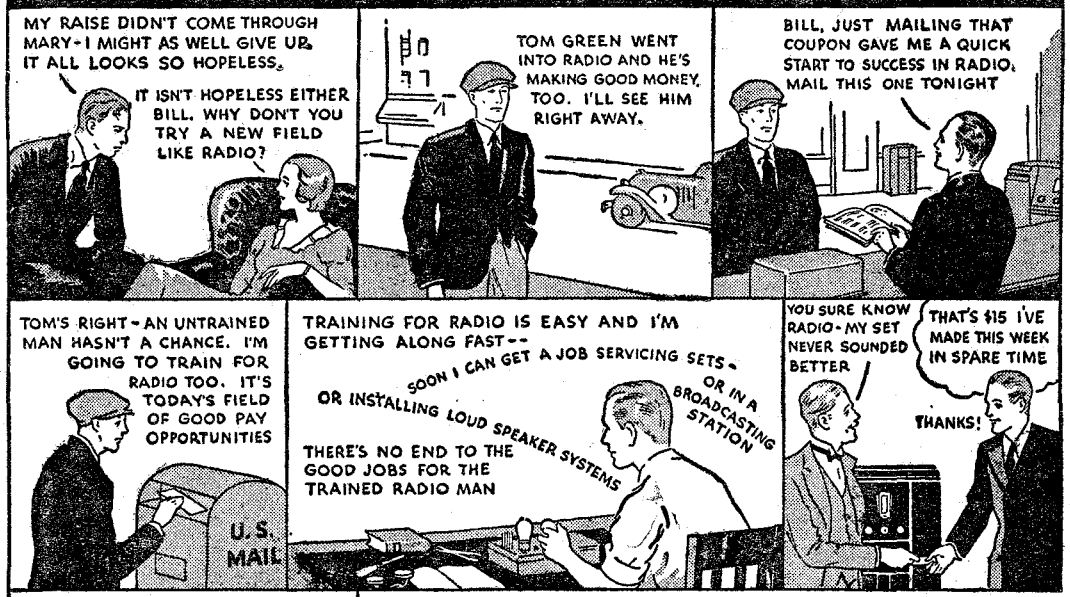
HE THOUGHT HE WAS LICKED—THEN A TIP GOT BILL A GOOD JOB!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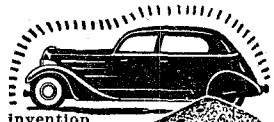

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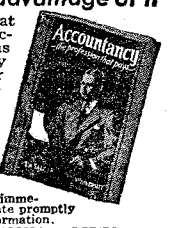
—and how you can take advantage of it



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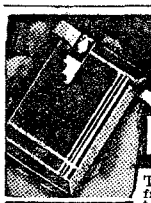

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Big League Bandit

By JUDSON P. PHILIPS

Author of "Flashing Blades," "Pigskin Pirate," etc.

Mike Havens, the tramp pitcher called himself—but that wasn't his name, and his past was to play a vital part in a Big League championship

Novelette—Complete

CHAPTER I.

THE TRAMP.

I SUPPOSE about the worst thing that can happen to a newspaper man is to have a scoop—just about the biggest scoop of all time—and not be able to break it. I've been a sports writer for years, and sports writers don't often have a chance for a scoop, but I had one—one hell of a big one—and I passed it up on account of a fourteen-year-old kid and because I have eaten and slept and thought and written nothing but baseball for the best part of my life. And that scoop

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of mine might have hurt the game if it had been broken at the time.

The kid was Bobby Roark, son of old Cap Roark who has been manager of the Sox for the last fifteen years, and one of the shrewdest baseball strategists since John McGraw was at the top of the pile. Bobby was four years old when Cap first came to the Sox, and from that time on the kid was always at the ball park. When he was six he knew more about baseball than most of your old time baseball fans. This kid not only knew the game but the players. He knew the hitting weaknesses of every slugger in the loop.

I remember one day when he was only ten the Sox were playing a tight series with Detroit that was going to come close to deciding the pennant. The Sox were one run up going into the nin when Detroit filled the bases wi.n two out. The tying and winning runs were on the bags and Big Ed Carver, their clean-up hitter was at bat.

The Sox pitcher worked the count to three balls and two strikes and everything hung on the next pitch. Suddenly out of the Sox dugout rushes this ten-year-old kid. He must have broken away from Cap in the excitement. The ump tries to shoo him off but he won't be shooed, and Doc Sullivan, who had just come up as a catcher with the Sox that year and was working behind the

With the bases full Mike went to work

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bat, came over to lend a hand. But the kid grabbed Doc and whispered something to him and then trotted back to the bench with all the fans laughing and yelling at him.

Well, on the next pitch Carver swung and missed a mile and the Sox had won the ball game and just about clinched the pennant. Doc Sullivan ripped off his mask and made a bee line for the bench. He grabbed up little Bobby and hoisted him up on his shoulder and made for the club house with him.

A bunch of sports writers got into the club house a little later and I cornered Doc Sullivan.

"What did the kid say to you?" I asked him, sensing a human interest yarn.

Doc laughed in a sort of hysterical way. "The little cuss!" he said. "He told me Carver was a sucker for a hard one high and inside. *I* didn't know Carver had any weakness but I played the kid's hunch, and you saw what happened."

That will give you some idea of how keen little Bobby Roark was for the game and why the ball players all loved him. And Bobby—well, he had a different standard for measuring men than most of us. He didn't care if a man was intelligent or dumb about ordinary things; he didn't care if he was good looking or a mug; he didn't care if he was a liar or if he'd cheat at cards or if he beat his wife.

There were just three questions Bobby asked about any man. Can he hit? Can he field his position? Has he got the old moxie in the clutch. . . . which translated into English means has he got nerve in a pinch? If you could answer "yes" to those questions about a man he was aces with Bobby Roark. But I'm getting away from the story about my scoop — the scoop I didn't break.

IT all began one March day in Florida at the spring training camp of the Sox. I'd been traveling with the club for years and during the training grind I used to put on a uniform myself and work out with the boys. We had a good club that spring. You notice I say "we" as though I was part of the club instead of just a baseball scribe. But I've traveled with 'em, eaten with 'em, and taken their money at poker for so many years that I feel as though I were part of their organization.

Well, as I say, we had a good club that spring. Our infield was tight as a drum and if Johnny Dawson, the Coast League phenom, can hit through the season the way he has in training, our outfield won't have to take a back seat to anyone. The only thing that made it doubtful as to whether or not we'd be right in there fighting for the old gonfalon is our pitching staff.

Of course Tommy Locke, our little southpaw, was one of the best in the business—right up in a class with Hubbell and Gomez, the two best lefties in either Major League. But after that we had a lot of question marks.

Could old Ed Forster put one more good season under his belt? Could Bill Pond, the speed merchant from the American Association, muster enough control for Major League pitching? Could Lefty Mitchell go through a full season or would he break down with a sore wing along about July as he had the year before? We had a fine relief pitcher in the veteran Bat Stallings, but he couldn't work over four or five innings at top speed. Those were the questions that bothered Cap Roark. The rest of his staff was a dime a

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dozen, with not one really potential starting hurler in the lot.

Cap Roark was wearing a worried frown on the afternoon when this story really started. We'd played an exhibition game with the National League champs and for three innings Tommy Locke had stood them on their ears, but after that came the deluge. They hammered Carl Cleaves, Clint Bowen, Tommy Mills, and Whitfield all over the State of Florida. Cap squatted in the shadow of the dugout, watching the debacle, and little Bobby squatted beside him, looking just like a pocket edition of his old man. Of course exhibition games don't mean a thing, particularly in the training season. But I could see that Cap was having bad dreams. There was no guarantee that his pitchers were going to be any more effective when the regular season started.

"If we had one more really good pitcher, Cap," I heard little Bobby say. He always called his father Cap, like the rest of us.

"Know any bushes where they grow, son?" Cap asked him sharply.

Little Bobby just shook his head. He was watching Tommy Mills out there on the mound. "Tommy's control would be better," he said, "if he shortened up his stride just a little before he lets the ball go."

Cap gave the kid a quick, almost tender look, "By God, I think you're right, son," he said. "I've been trying to spot what was wrong with him."

"That big stride throws him off balance just at the last minute," said Bobby, in an intense voice. He always spoke that way when baseball was the subject. And baseball was *always* the subject. It has nothing to do with this story, but the fact is Mills improved his control about fifty per cent when Cap told him what the kid had said. Fourteen years old Bobby Roark was at that time.

AFTER that game, Doc Sullivan, our first string catcher, and I walked toward the club house together and I told him what the kid had said about Mills. Doc was laughing and nodding in agreement.

"That kid could manage a Big League ball club right now better than half the guys who have the job," he said.

We were just reaching the exit gate of the field when a man suddenly hopped over the bleacher rail and came toward us. Right away I spotted him for a panhandler. Florida was lousy with 'em that spring. He wore a ragged, dirty suit, he hadn't shaved for several days and he had a checked cap pulled down over his face—a face that hadn't seen much Florida sunshine if the whiteness of it meant anything. He had a tiny stub of a cigarette between his lips, so short that it seemed as though it must burn him any second. Somehow I knew he'd picked up a butt where someone had dropped it.

This fellow reached the exit gate before we did and blocked the way.

"You're Doc Sullivan, aren't you?" he asked Doc.

"Yes," Doc said, looking at this tramp in a puzzled fashion. The man had spoken so softly you could hardly hear him. Suddenly he smiled, and he had very white, even teeth. I saw that his eyes were bloodshot, as though he hadn't had much sleep lately, but they were gray and steady.

"Perhaps you wouldn't believe it by looking at me," he said, "but I'm a pitcher."

"Yeah?" said Doc, in a skeptical way. Hundreds of would-be ball play-

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ers turn up in the South in the spring.

"Yes," said the tramp, and he flicked away the butt of the cigarette. "I'd like a chance to prove it."

"Sorry," said Doc, "I can't do anything for you. You'll have to appy to Cap Roark, the manager."

The tramp didn't move out of the way. "You see," he said, in that very soft voice, "I've never played professional ball, so I have no record to back up my claim. But I thought if I could throw a few to you, a catcher, you'd be able to tell whether I'd do."

"Sorry," said Doc, "I—"

"Why don't you give him a chance, Doc?" We all turned around to look at little Bobby Roark, who'd come up without our noticing it. The kid was looking at the tramp very seriously, with those keen, appraising blue eyes of his. Doc laughed. He couldn't refuse the kid anything any more than the rest of us could.

"Okay, fella," he said to the tramp. "Get over there and let me see what you've got."

"I haven't thrown a ball this spring," said the tramp, in his soft voice. "But perhaps after a few warm-up pitches . . ."

"Here, you can borrow my mitt," said Bobby to the tramp.

"Thanks, kid."

THE tramp took off his coat, slipped Bobby's mitt on his left hand and walked over away from Doc. Doc took a ball out of his hip pocket and tossed it to the tramp. The tramp took an easy, slow wind-up and threw a soft one in to Doc. He certainly had a nice free motion. I took a look at Bobby and the kid's eyes were bright with excitement.

"He ought to have a world of speed with those big broad shoulders and long arms," the kid said to me. "And he handles himself like a ball player. He reminds me of Wes Ferrell, the Boston ace. Does he you?"

"If he's as good as Wes Ferrell," I laughed, "the Sox will be the next World Champs."

"Maybe they will be," said the kid, in that intense voice of his. He never took his eyes off the tramp, who was still lobbing them in easily to Doc.

Presently the tramp rubbed his pitching hand in the dirt and looked at Doc with that bright smile that seemed to change his whole face.

"Now we'll turn on a little juice," he said. "This one goes out and down."

He took the same easy wind-up that he'd used to lob 'em in, but this time the ball shot out of his fingers like a bullet—a sharp, breaking out-drop that I could see from where I stood. I looked down at the kid and most of the color had drained out of his face, and his eyes were feverishly bright. The tramp threw again. This time the ball broke sharply the other way—an in-drop. Just about the hardest pitch to throw.

"Screw ball," said the tramp, with a grin. And he let fly. It was a honey. Then, with the same motion he served up a tantalizing, slow floater. Even Doc was excited now.

"Hey, that's enough," he shouted. "No need to throw your arm out now. Turn up at the hotel tonight. I'll take the responsibility with Cap for givin' you a trial."

Little Bobby Roark's fingers were biting hard into my arm. "He's the goods, Joe," he said to me. "He's the goods."

Doc was talking to the tramp. "Come up to the hotel," he said. "I'll fix you up with a razor and maybe we

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can dig up some clothes for you. And you can sign your food check. Tomorrow I'll have Cap look you over and unless I'm crazy he'll sign you up on a provisional contract."

The tramp looked down at the toe of his worn shoe, scuffing it in the grass. "I—I guess I won't come to the hotel," he said. "But I'll turn up for the workout tomorrow, if you can provide me with a baseball suit and a glove."

"Don't worry about that," said Doc, in a jovial mood now. "By the way, fella, what's your name?"

"My name?" The tramp hesitated just long enough so I wondered about it. "Havens," he said finally. "Mike Havens."

"Okay, Mike," Doc said. "If you'll wait till I get to my clothes in the locker room I'll lend you a five-spot against your salary."

Havens' lips tightened into a thin smile. "Thanks all the same," he said stiffly. "I can manage all right. I'll see you tomorrow." And before any of us could stop him he had slipped out through the exit gate.

Little Bobby Roark looked after him, and his fingers were still gripping my arm tightly. "Gee, I hate to see him go," he said. "If anything should happen to him . . ."

CHAPTER II.

MAN WITH NO PAST.

FINDING stuff to write about from training camp that isn't the same old hooey is pretty difficult. Naturally when I did my stint that night I took a crack at the story of how young Bobby Roark had won a chance for Mike Havens by insisting that Doc give him a try. Silent Mike Havens I called him on account of his soft voice, and the name stuck. It stuck not only for that reason, but because we reporters found out later it was just about as easy to get Havens to talk as it is to open an oyster without a sharp knife.

I don't think Cap was very excited when Bobby got back to the hotel and told him about the tramp he'd discovered who looked exactly like Wes Ferrell when he threw a ball. Cap had heard about too many spring phenoms and seen too many of 'em explode to get worked up because a guy threw three or four pitches to Doc Sullivan that had a lot of stuff on 'em. But he saw how excited the kid was, and I guess he would have cut off his right arm for that boy without a murmur.

"Sure we'll give him a tryout," he promised Bobby.

The next morning Bobby was at the club house early, jittering around like a Mexican jumping bean. We were having two workouts a day with only the pitchers who were likely to work in the exhibition game in the afternoon excused from the morning grind. Every time the club house door opened Bobby would look anxiously to see if it was his protégé. Well, at last Havens showed up, coming through the door into the club house a bit shyly. He still had on the old suit and the checked cap, but he'd managed to get a shave for himself somewhere. Bobby was over at his side in a second.

"Gee, Mike," he said, "I'm glad to see you. I was afraid maybe you wouldn't show up."

Havens gave him that nice grin of his. "I applied for the job, didn't I, kid? No chance of my turning it down if there's any chance of my keeping it."

Well, the trainer rigged him out in

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a uniform and a pair of shoes and a glove and Havens and Bobby and I all went out onto the field together. Bobby took Havens right over to Cap and introduced him.

"Okay, Havens, warm up and then I'll look you over," said Cap, good-naturedly.

"Not a chance," said Bobby sharply. "You wouldn't ask Tommy Locke, or Ed Forster, or Bill Pond or any of our other pitchers to show you their stuff the first day out. Mike needs three or four days of easy work, Cap, before you get him to cut loose."

Cap only hesitated for a second. I knew that he was thinking the club was loaded down with a lot of rookies now, and there was hardly any chance at all that this stranger who admitted he'd never played professionally before would do. But Bobby looked so intense about it Cap just couldn't say no.

"I'll let you know when he's ready to open up, Cap," said Bobby happily.

WELL, the kid went over and got a catcher's mitt and started warming up Havens himself. Somehow I couldn't watch anything else for the next half hour. Once or twice Havens threw one a little bit hard and Bobby would yell at him.

"Take it easy, Mike."

Havens just grinned and went on warming up easy. I must say he looked like plenty of ball player, decked out in a uniform. After about three-quarters of an hour I heard Bobby's shrill voice shouting orders.

"Put on this windbreaker, Mike, then run one lap around the field and then into the club house and get a hot shower and have the trainer rub down your arm and shoulder. See you this afternoon for the workout before the game."

Havens looked over at Cap, who was trying not to laugh at Bobby's earnestness, and Cap nodded confirmation. "The kid's your boss till the time comes for a showdown, Havens."

"Right," said Havens, and trotted off on his lap around the field.

Well, this went on for about four days, with Havens not once opening up. On the fifth day, young Bobby got Ray McKee, the second string catcher on the Sox, to warm up Silent Mike.

"When you're ready," the kid said to Mike, "open up with a few."

Havens threw ten or fifteen balls easy and then he nodded to McKee. He fogged the next half dozen, threw them so hard you could almost see 'em smoke. McKee looked so surprised I had to laugh. Fast ones, hooks, screw ball, floater, all from that same, easy, effortless wind-up. Bobby had wandered off looking for Cap and presently they came back together.

"The kid says you're all ready to throw some to the hitters in batting practice," Cap said.

"All right with me," grinned Havens.

"You're not supposed to put anything much on the ball," said Cap. "Just toss 'em up."

Well, the regulars are hitting and Havens did just what Cap told him—lobbed 'em up. The boys hammered what he threw all over the lot. Then as the batting order came around a second time Cap called out to Havens, "All right, fella, let's see a little pitching."

JOE CRUISE, the Sox lead-off man, was at the plate—a fine hitter with a camera eye. Joe never hit at a bad ball in his life, or not many, anyhow. Cap moved over behind the netting to

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watch what happened, and Bobby stood beside him, white-faced, anxious. If Havens was worried about what kind of a showing he'd make you couldn't have told it from his cool, nonchalant manner out there on the mound. He stood talking to Doc Sullivan, who was taking a workout behind the plate, arranging some signals. Then the show started.

Of course, there weren't any fielders in the regular positions—just a lot of guys in the outfield shagging flies and hits, and a couple of rookies playing at short and first. But there needn't have been any fielders! Boy, oh, boy, did Silent Mike uncork something. Joe Cruise is a notorious first ball hitter, but he was seconds late on his swing at Havens's first pitch, a sizzling fast ball right across his chest.

It was quite a show. Mike gave them everything he had and it was too good for them. Cruise, French, Dawson, Dick Gainor, Conroy and all the rest of the boys couldn't get a smell of him! Oh, they hacked off a few fouls, and they popped up a few that would have been easy for infielders, and they pounded a few down into the dirt, but there wasn't one real smash that you could have labeled a hit in the bunch of them.

Bobby was jumping up and down with excitement and I could see a gleam in Cap's eye that told me worlds. Silent Mike had more stuff than he'd seen in a rookie pitcher in years. Control . . . the works! After the team had batted around once, Cap waved Havens off the mound.

"Get into the club house and have the trainer rub down your arm, and come around to the hotel at noon and we'll sign you to a contract. You'll do, Havens."

Havens looked down, shuffling at the grass with one of his spiked shoes. "I'm very grateful, Mr. Roark," he said. "I need the job. But—but couldn't you bring the contract out to the field this afternoon? I—I made an engagement with a friend for noontime—and—" He stopped and looked up with a sort of curious helplessness at Cap.

"That's all right," said Cap. "We can fix up the contract tonight when you move over to our hotel."

Havens still kicked at the grass with his shoe. "I—I sort of promised the people where I'm staying that I'd be there for a while. Wouldn't it be all right for me to go on living there, Mr. Roark. I—well, I'm sort of obligated, and—"

"Couldn't you settle all that later, Cap?" Bobby piped up. "Mike's arm'll go stiff if you keep him standing around here. Why not bring the contract out here this afternoon, like he suggested. You can talk about the hotel later."

Havens flashed the kid a sort of grateful smile. I guess Cap was too pleased with Havens to have any kind of argument with him, though it was funny, his not wanting to come to the hotel. Most young ball players would have been tickled pink.

Everyone was talking about Havens at lunch time. He'd showed the boys plenty and they were all hopped up about him.

"If he's half as good as he seems," Doc Sullivan pronounced, "we'll be bankin' a World Series cut next fall—and it won't be the short end."

CAP took the contract out to the ball park that afternoon and got ready to sign Havens. But when Havens came in he raised the question about the hotel once more.

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"It may seem crazy to you, Mr. Roark, but—well, I have my reasons for not wanting to stay there. I know you have everyone in the club stopping there, but I—well, if I had to do that, I'd just not sign."

"It sounds goofy to me, Havens," said Cap. "I never heard of a ball player turning down first class accommodations and free meals before. But as long as you keep in shape and play ball the best you can there's no real reason why you shouldn't live alone. I warn you, though, some of the boys may think it a little queer."

"I'll have to risk that, Mr. Roark," says Havens.

The boys *did* think it was funny. Some of them accused Havens of being high hat, but there wasn't anything in the way he acted on the ball field to back it up. He just went about his job, never saying much, always smiling that wide, friendly smile at anyone he spoke to. I tried to corner him one afternoon to get a story out of him. He should have made good copy—obviously broke, getting a tryout when a fourteen-year-old kid interceded for him, making the Sox hitters look like bush-leaguers when he worked against them in batting practice. But getting anything out of Silent Mike was like pulling teeth.

"Where did you spring from, Havens?" I asked him.

"Me?" He kicked at the grass with his foot, that funny way he had, his eyes averted. "Why, I been batting around the West most of my life."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-six."

"Where were you born?"

"Oh, out West."

I was getting nowhere fast. "You say you've never played professional ball before?"

"Well, I did play a little semi-pro ball. I used to get five bucks for pitching for a hotel team," he said.

"Where was that?"

"The hotel?" he repeated. "Oh, that. Why, up in New England." He still kicked at the grass, his eyes turned away. "A summer hotel."

"Where?" I was bound I'd get one piece of definite information.

"Where? Oh, up in Boston."

"A summer hotel in Boston," I said dryly.

"That's right," he said, calm as you like.

"What hotel?"

"Oh, one of the big ones," he said. So I gave up on that tack. "Where did you learn to pitch?" I asked him. "You know too darned much about it to have learned it without any coaching."

"That's right," he said readily. "We had a good coach in college—an old-time ball player. He taught me all I know."

"What college was that?"

He scuffed some more at the grass. "Just a small college," he said. "Probably you never heard of it."

"I've heard of all of them," I told him. "What one was this?"

"Why—why, Williams," he said.

"What are you trying to hand me?" I asked him. "Williams is a very well known college . . . and it's in Massachusetts. I thought you came from the West."

"I went West after I graduated from college," he said.

WELL, by that time I was peeved. After all, stories about ball players are my business and they're swell publicity for the boys. I couldn't figure out why Havens was stalling me.

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"I even know the coach at Williams," I said. "He's Smoky Joe Wood, the old Boston pitcher."

"That's right," said Havens quietly.

Then I had him. "Now look, Havens," I said. "I don't know what your gag is, but you're handing me a lot of hooey. Smoky Joe Wood isn't the coach at Williams and never was, as far as I know. He's at Yale. What's the idea of all this boloney?"

For the first time Havens looked squarely at me, and there was a kind of cold, steely glitter in his gray eyes. "What the hell difference does it make to you about my past?" he demanded sharply.

"I don't even think your name is Havens," I said.

"What if it isn't?" he rapped. "There's no law against a guy taking another name for professional purposes, is there? Plenty of ball players don't use their right names. Write all you want about what I do on the ball field, but lay off my past history. It's nobody's business but mine!" And with that he walked away.

I was pretty sore at the time, but that afternoon Havens gave us something to write about. We were playing the Cards in an exhibition game. The two Deans pitched the first six innings against us, three apiece, and we couldn't do a thing with them. Meanwhile the Cards touched up Ed Forster and Cleaves for five runs. But in the seventh Bat Stallings holds the Cards scoreless and our boys hop on a recruit pitcher the Cards have brought up from the Texas League for four runs, and nick him for a couple more in the eighth which puts us one to the good.

Bat blanks the St. Louis club again in the eighth, but he runs into hot water in the ninth. The first man up singles, and then Larry Chappelle, our shortstop, muffs a simple double play ball and there are two on. Bat walks the next hitter and the bags are loaded with nobody down. It was into that spot that Cap Roark called Silent Mike for his first taste of Major League competition.

Havens walked in slowly, unexcitedly, from the bull pen and throws his warm-up pitches to Doc Sullivan. The crowd was yelling for blood with the tying and winning runs on the bases and nobody out and the three heaviest hitters in the Card batting order coming up. There couldn't have been a worse spot for an inexperienced pitcher. Havens looked relaxed and cool out there as he leaned forward to catch Doc Sullivan's signal. Little Bobby was sliding up and down the bench, his hands clenched tightly together.

"You've got to do it, Mike! You've got to!" I heard him whisper.

Well, Mike did it. Ten pitched balls and the ball game was over. The second hitter to face Mike got a foul. The rest of the time they either missed that fire ball he was pouring in there by a mile, or stood looking at it whiz past them with a sort of puzzled look on their faces.

From that point on there was never any doubt about Silent Mike's qualifications as a Big Leaguer. And there was plenty to write about.

CHAPTER III.

A HEART-BREAKER.

THE story of Silent Mike's meteoric career isn't news to any of the baseball fans of the country. Everyone knows how that unknown rookie stepped up into the regular firing

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line and proceeded to stand the league on its ear all through the hot summer months.

To the fans he was just a swell ball player who had a world of pitching equipment and knew how to use it and would probably land the Sox in the World Series. But to the rest of us he was something else—one of the strangest guys that ever came along the pike.

You've all heard of goofy ball players; there've been a flock of 'em in my time. But Silent Mike wasn't goofy in the ordinary way. He didn't pull any crazy wise cracks, or do anything odd on the ball field. But his private life was an enigma. From the very first he never lived with the ball club.

On our road trips he would leave us at the railroad station and we wouldn't see him again till it was time to show up at the ball park. At first a couple of fellows would ask him where he was staying and Mike told 'em—some boarding house, he would explain. Well, one day Chuck French and I decided we'd run him down just to see what kind of place he hung out in. We went to the address he gave us and it was an empty warehouse! When we asked him about it he said he'd made a mistake in the number and gave us another one. Just out of curiosity we went there. It turned out to be a doctor's house and he'd never heard of Mike Havens! And he didn't take any boarders!

It got to be a kind of joke for a while and we used to kid Havens about it, but somehow it never seemed to amuse him. In fact, he got pretty sore about it and told us in no uncertain terms that we should mind our own business.

Finally the whole club got up a pool of two bucks apiece, the pool to go to the fellow who found out where Havens lived and where he ate. Some of the boys tried trailing him after the ball game, but Havens always gave them the slip. If he knew he was being followed he never said anything about it, but unless he did I don't know how he always managed to disappear into thin air when the boys were after him.

There was one person, though, who didn't care a damn about Silent Mike's strange habits, and that was little Bobby Roark. I guess Silent Mike had given the kid the biggest thrill he had ever since he'd been traveling around with the ball club. It was the kid who really discovered him, and from Bobby's standpoint Mike was a man—a real man! Didn't he have the best fast ball in the league? Hadn't he trimmed every club in the circuit? Didn't he have ice water in his veins when it came to a tight spot? Oh, Mike was the kid's hero and there was no getting around that.

The kid seemed to be the only person Mike ever got chummy with too. Perhaps it was because Bobby never talked about anything but baseball and that was the only ground on which Havens seemed to be at ease. It didn't matter to Bobby where he came from or where he lived or ate; all that mattered to him was that Havens could stand out there on the rubber and fog his fast ball through the dish for nine innings, and notch up another victory for the Sox.

Honestly, I think the kid dreamed about Havens at night. His eyes never left the big pitcher when we were on the field. He was always running to Havens with tips about enemy hitters, and Havens would listen gravely and after an inning was over he'd grin at Bobby when he came in to the bench.

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"You were certainly right about that guy, kid. He's a sucker for that low, hard one."

And Bobby would darn near burst with pride.

THE rest of the fellows were sure keen about Havens' pitching; don't make any mistake about that. He and Tommy Locke were carrying the club on their backs. The rest of the staff had turned out to be even less stable than Cap had feared during training season. Ed Forster turned in a good game now and then, and Cleaves and Tommy Mills bobbed up with a good day about once a month. But Lefty Mitchell's arm had gone bad in June and the rest of the staff were not any use at all. It was Havens and Locke, Havens and Locke.

They could both pitch every third or fourth day, they never seemed to get tired, and I don't think either of them pitched a really bad ball game all summer. By the time September came along they'd both passed the twenty mark in victories and hadn't lost more than a dozen games between them.

Don't get the idea that the race was a walkover. It was anything but that. The Corsairs were clawing at our tail the whole way. We seesawed in and out of first place until the Fourth of July and then the Sox got a little lead and clung to it like grim death. We were never able to stretch it beyond five full games and most of the time we were hanging on by an eyelash.

By the time we got toward the last weeks of the campaign, we began to see that the pennant was really going to hang on the last series of the season, because the schedule was bringing us into a five-game series with the Corsairs themselves to wind up the season.

Those last weeks were heartbreakers. We played most of our games with an eye on the scoreboard, watching to see what the Corsairs were doing. It seemed as though they couldn't lose a ball game those last weeks. And when they did we always seemed to get dumped ourselves. Our bunch were beginning to show signs of wear and tear as we came into the last week. A hundred and fifty-four ball games is a long, gruelling schedule and with never a chance for a let-up our nerves were on the ragged edge.

Right at that point Tommy Locke had his first real slump of the season. The Detroit Tigers hammered him out of the box in one game and his next time out he lost a heartbreaker to Cleveland. And then the Corsairs came to town and we're hanging on the ropes, just two games to the good.

Of course in one way that wasn't such a tough situation because all we had to do was win two of the five games with the Corsairs to clinch the flag. But the Corsairs have been coming down the home stretch like a runaway locomotive, and we've been missing on about five out of our eight cylinders. The papers all likened the situation to the one in the National League the year before when the Cards nosed out the Giants on the very last day of the season.

"Locke and Havens ought to win those two necessary games for the Sox," the *Sun* man wrote, "but with a badly shaken ball club behind them even these two great hurlers may have their troubles. The Corsairs are a fighting, hell-bent-for-leather bunch of players, riding rough shod on a victory wave. If they can beat either Locke or Havens my money is on them, for with five games crowded into four days it is doubtful if either of the Sox hurlers can appear twice."

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There was only one guy who didn't seem to be worried and that was little Bobby Roark. "Mike will win both games we need if necessary," he said with calm confidence.

WELL, the double-header with the Corsairs was scheduled for the first day of the series. I know Cap Roark and the boys went into a long huddle about the proper strategy. Should he throw Locke and Havens against them on that first day and try to break their back then and there? If he did, and failed, that might be the works. It was finally agreed that Tom Locke should pitch the first game. If he won, Havens would not be used in the second game because the law of averages would be working against him. The Corsairs hadn't dropped both ends of a double-header all season. But if Locke lost, Havens was to pitch the second game.

Locke lost.

It was a heartbreaker. One of the toughest games a pitcher could have go wrong with him. For eight innings Locke was his old self. His wizardly control had the Corsairs chopping and hacking away without any luck. Meanwhile, our gang managed to chisel two runs off Mack Russell, the Corsairs' star right-hander. With the ninth inning coming up Locke had only to get out three more men and the first of those two precious victories was ours. But he didn't get 'em.

The first man up hit a tantalizing Texas Leaguer toward center that was just out of reach of Cruise and Chuck French, our second baseman. The Corsairs began hammering their bats on the dugout steps and yelling for a rally. The crowd, fifty thousand strong, were yelling like hyenas. Out there in the center of the diamond little Tommy Locke stood, cool, unruffled. Crowd hysteria never ruffled a pitcher of his poise and courage.

He worked carefully on the next hitter and a roar went up from the crowd as the Corsair hit an easy bounder down the third base line—a double play ball. Frank Ellerbe grabs it and throws clear into right field. I know my heart sank right down into my boots. Instead of having two out and nobody on, Locke has two on and nobody out.

Cap Roark ran in from the bench to the mound to talk things over with Locke and they agreed that the next hitter should be purposely passed so that they'd have a force play everywhere. Bases full, nobody out, tying and winning runs in a position to score. Lord, what a tough spot for Locke—and not of his own making.

Honestly, there was a lump in my throat as I watched him work out there like the master pitcher that he is. All the cunning and strength and nerve that he had was brought to bear on that next hitter with the result that he popped up an easy one which Locke collared himself. One down! A minute later the crowd went mad when Locke fanned the next hitter for out number two! My God, he was going to get out of it! If he could get this next man . . .

I was on my feet yelling a hoarse shout of triumph—the whole place was screaming—for Locke forced the next hitter to hit an easy fly to right. It was a fly that a four-year-old kid could have caught in his hip pocket, and Johnny Dawson came in easy for it . . . and fell flat on his face before he got to the ball. It sailed over his head to the fence and before Joe Cruise could retrieve it three runs were over and the ball game had gone out the window.

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Oh, we had our turn at bat in the ninth, but the Corsairs had tasted victory. Russell bore down hard and that was the finish. Instead of pitching a shutout, Locke had had one cuffed away behind him.

YOU could feel the courage oozing right out of the hearts of the Sox in the club house between games. If Locke had been hammered all over the lot they wouldn't have felt so badly. But to have him pitch a perfect game, only to lose it! Johnny Dawson was frankly crying like a kid.

"God, to stumble over my own feet with the ball game right there in my hands!"

Frank Ellerbe, who'd made the other error, just sat on the bench in front of his locker with his head sunk in his hands. The only three people in the room who didn't seem to be sunk were Locke himself, little Bobby Roark, and Silent Mike Havens who was due to pitch the second game now. Locke had lost tough ones before and he wasn't the kind of guy to crab about it. Little Bobby was only concerned with the fact that his hero was about to put us back in the running. Havens himself never had nerves before a game.

"There's a hell of a lot resting on you, Mike," Cap Roark said to his star right-hander.

Silent Mike grinned his pleasant grin. "We've had tough breaks," he said. "We'll cop this one."

A few minutes later Havens and McKee went out to warm up for the second game. The Corsairs' hurler was already tuning up when they got out on the field, a wild and woolly southpaw named Cullen with a world of stuff and just wild enough so that a hitter never dared take a toe hold against him. He looked smiling and confident. In fact the whole Corsair outfit had the air of a winning ball club about them.

Havens didn't pay any attention to anything except the job of limbering up that million-dollar arm of his. I watched him and I could see from his free and easy motions that he was relaxed, in top form. I began to feel better. Well, Havens was just beginning to put a little something on the ball when I saw a gray-haired man in one of the boxes near the home plate stand up and call to him.

"Havens!"

Silent Mike was in the middle of a wind-up and he looked sharply over at the gray-haired man. He seemed to contract in the middle of his throw and the ball went ten feet over McKee's head into the wire screen. For just a scond Havens stood staring at the gray-haired man, who called him again.

"Havens!"

Mike walked slowly over to where McKee stood, said something to McKee, and then walked straight across the diamond and the outfield to the club house. Cap Roark and the boys, who were all tossing the ball around now, looked after him in surprise. McKee went over to Cap to explain.

"He's got on a new sweat shirt," said McKee. "He says it kind of binds him around the shoulder. He's gone to get his old one."

The umps were out on the field now, brushing off the plate and filling the ball box with new league balls. It was game time.

"Havens'll be right back," Cap told Kramer, the umpire-in-chief.

But Havens didn't come. Cap sent little Bobby on the run to the club house to tell Mike to step on it. The crowd was yelling for the game to

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start. Still no Havens. It was perhaps five minutes before little Bobby came back, head down, running as though his feet dragged before him. He was white as a sheet and there were tears streaming down his face. He stood in front of Cap, unable to speak.

"He—he's gone!" he finally blurted out.

"What the hell are you talking about?" Cap demanded roughly.

"Gone!" Bobby cried. "Nobody knows where! But he's gone!"

It was a funny thing, but just then I noticed that the gray-haired man in the box who had hollered at Mike was gone, too.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GRAY-HAIRED MAN.

I KNEW right then and there that the story of the day wasn't going to be what happened in the second game of that double-header. I made tracks around through the stands for the club house. Cap Roark and Bobby had beaten me to it and were already questioning the club house boy, who looked scared green.

"What are you going to do?" I asked Cap.

"What the hell can I do?" Cap snarled. "The ump has given us an extra five minutes for Forster to warm up. The ball game has to go on, Havens or no Havens. But, by God, if I ever lay my hands on that low-grade so-and-so! Walking out on us in a pinch like this!"

Little Bobby's face was ashen. "He didn't run out on you, Cap!" he insisted stubbornly. "Something's happened to him! Something awful!"

"Nuts! He got cold feet and quit," Cap said. He was too mad to do any very clear thinking. "I always knew there was something screwy about that bird . . . with all the mystery about where he lives and all that!"

"Something's happened to him!" Bobby insisted.

"My God, kid!" Cap cried, kind of desperately, "nobody dragged him off the ball field, did they? You—" He jabbed a finger at the locker boy. "Tell me what happened again!"

"Why—why, nothin', Mr. Roark. I was standing out on the balcony outside your office where I always watch the game from, Mr. Roark. Mr. Havens came in from across the field and I called out and asked him if he wanted anything."

"So what?"

"He said there wasn't nothing, so I stayed out there on the balcony. I didn't see him come out again, but I figured maybe you'd decided not to use him this afternoon or something."

"You didn't hear any noise?" I asked him. "Didn't hear Havens talking to anyone?"

"I didn't hear a thing, sir," said the kid. "That's the honest truth."

"What the hell, there's no use ducking the facts, is there?" Cap growled. "He's walked out on us—the yellow rat!"

"I tell you something's happened to him," said Bobby, but his voice was shaking a little now.

"Have you looked in his locker?" I asked.

"Sure," said Cap. "He put on a rain coat over his uniform and beat it. His street clothes are still there. He certainly was in one hell of a hurry to get out of here."

That was a fact. Havens must have gone out without even stopping to change his spiked shoes.

"Well, I got to get back to the ball

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game," said Cap bitterly. "*I* don't walk out on lickings myself."

"The Corsairs would never have beaten Mike!" Bobby said loyally.

"Sure," snarled Cap. "That's why he quit! Well, they're going to beat Ed Forster and I've got to go out there and take it!"

Bobby didn't go with him. He just sat down on a bench and looked out before him; he looked like he was going to be sick. I was trying to puzzle things out myself. Being a newspaper man I sensed some kind of a wow here. Star pitcher walks out before crucial game! Leaves ball field—after man in box called to him! Unless Havens turned up damn quick with an explanation this was going to be a nine days' wonder. He had been queer, but never temperamental as far as his playing.

WELL, I decided a little snooping was in order, and little Bobby looked so miserable I took him with me. The first thing we found out was a blow to the kid. There was a line of taxis outside our club house and two or three of the drivers had seen Havens come out, a rain coat over his uniform, and take the first cab in the line. Nobody'd heard the address he gave the driver. But most of them knew the driver and we were able to check on where Havens went later.

Right then I got on the phone and gave my paper the story of the mysterious walk-out of Silent Mike. While all this was going on the Sox were playing the second game of that double-header in a daze and taking a terrible cuffing. Ed didn't have time to get warmed up and the Corsairs, sensing the chance to put the clincher on us, lit into Ed in the first inning and blasted out four runs. After that it was a parade of Corsair runs and Sox pitchers. When the day was over we were in a tie for first place with three games left to go against a club that looked unstoppable.

The boys were sore and sunk after that game. But they weren't talking about the game. They were cussing out Mike Havens to a fare-thee-well. They were calling him "quitter" and "yellow" and Lord knows what else. Only Doc Sullivan, his catcher, stood up for Mike.

"I don't know why he walked out," he said, "but it wasn't because he lost his nerve. That guy has ice water in his veins when it comes to a tough game and the whole bunch of you know it."

"You're right, Doc!" little Bobby said eagerly. "He'll have a good explanation when he shows up tomorrow and he'll stand those Corsairs on their ears!"

Right then I had a conviction deep down inside that Havens wasn't going to show up tomorrow or any other time. But I didn't say anything about it. We were back at the hotel and just sitting down for dinner when the taxi driver that had driven Havens away from the park turned up.

"I just drove him to an uptown subway station and that's the last I saw of him," he said. So the trail ended before it had really gotten hot.

Before the next day rolled around I guess every baseball fan in the country was jabbering over the mystery of Mike's disappearance. I printed the story about the gray-haired man in the box in my account, and urged him, if he knew anything about it, to make himself known. But nothing came of that. Judge Porter, who owned the Sox, held a conference in his office with Cap and me and several other newspaper men.

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"The whole thing is incomprehensible to me," the Judge said. "He had nothing to complain about; he was satisfied with his salary; he hadn't had a row with any of the boys. There was no reason in God's world for him to walk out."

"Does anyone know if any kind of a message was delivered to him?" someone asked.

"We know there wasn't," said Cap bluntly. "The only way he'd get a message was through the club house, and there was nothing."

JUST at that minute the Judge's office door burst open and Pete Moran, manager of the Corsairs, came barging in with his face the color of a tomato and his eyes popping with rage. He slammed a copy of a tabloid newspaper down on the Judge's desk.

"Is any of you guys responsible for that?" he yelled.

Screaming headlines: "SUSPECT HAVENS KIDNAPED TO INSURE CORSAIRS OF WINNING PENNANT."

"That's a lot of prune juice, and you know it, Pete," Cap soothed. "There ain't one of us even thought of such a thing."

"If I catch the wall-eyed babboon that started that story I'll break him into four thousand pieces! I'm sorry your star pitcher's walked out on you, Cap, but we'd have pinned back his ears anyhow." And with that he grabbed up his paper and stormed out again.

The Judge looked grim. "I'm hiring private detectives to find Havens if it's humanly possible," he said. "We can't have stories like that floating around. It's bad for the game—bad for us and for the Corsairs."

But the Judge's detectives didn't have any luck by game time that afternoon, and Havens didn't show up of his own accord. The Corsairs handed us our third straight licking, pounding Pond, Tommy Mills, and Bat Stallings for nine runs. That put 'em in first place by a full game and meant that we had to win the last two to collect the gravy.

Little Bobby, sitting on the bench that afternoon, looked all shriveled up and gone at the middle. He hardly watched the ball game at all, but every once in a while you could see him shoot a glance toward the exit gate in deep right center as though he expected to see Silent Mike suddenly appear and come out to take up the fight. But he didn't.

Well, we had to win the fourth game the next day or cash in our chips and there was nothing for Cap to do but throw Tommy Locke back in there, despite the fact that he'd only had one day's rest since that heartbreaking defeat he took in the first game of the series. I guess there isn't a gamer, cooler, tougher-hearted pitcher in the business than that little southpaw.

"Listen, you guys," he said to the whole club in the dressing room just before it was time to go out on the field. "This is just another ball game. If we lose it . . . well, it won't be the end of the world. There'll be other seasons and other pennants. Stop worrying and fretting and just go out and play ball the way you know how. We've lost three straight and we're due to win one, and I've got a hunch this is it. Let's go!"

WELL, Tommy may have pitched better games in his life, but he never pitched a more courageous one. The Corsairs nicked him for a run in the first and another in the third.

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But in our half of the third Doc Sullivan walked with one down and Tommy himself came up to the plate and belted one over the right field wall for a round tripper, tying the score.

This seemed to be just the shot in the arm our boys needed and before the inning was over, Cruise, French, Dawson, Dick Gainor, and Conroy all smacked out hits. Conroy's being a triple that added four more runs to our total and put us in the lead, 6-2. We never did get going again, but Tommy had just enough left in that left arm of his to win the ball game. The Corsairs nicked him for runs in the fifth, eighth and ninth, but Tommy ended the ball game with two on bases by striking out Walker, their big hitter, and leaving us with a 6-5 edge.

That put us back in a tie for first with everything hanging on the last game. The Corsairs have their star, Russell, ready to come back at us and we've got a whole staff of pitchers with lame arms and very little hope left to throw in against him.

Cap sat up all night trying to figure out what to do. All of us had stopped hoping that Havens would appear, except little Bobby who still clung desperately and doggedly to the conviction that a miracle would happen and the big fireball thrower would turn up in time to win the clinching ball game for us. Bobby looked like a shadow; he had hardly eaten anything for two days and Cap was really worried about him. But there was nothing to do except play out the string.

Cap hit on a daring plan of campaign for that last game. He decided to start young Whitfield, who was really nothing more than a batting practice pitcher. The Corsairs had never faced him and Cap figured maybe for a few innings Whitfield might hold them in check, because he had a kind of peculiar, corkscrew wind-up that was difficult for a hitter to get the hang of until he'd faced him another time. If Whitfield could last a few innings he'd then throw old Bat Stallings in for a frame or two, and possibly Tommy Locke might be able to pitch an inning or so if the going got tough. It was a bright idea, but I don't think any of us had any real hope that it would work.

I noticed that for the first time since I could remember, young Bobby didn't show up in the club house when the boys were dressing for the game. He was usually the first one there.

Cap had a few words to say to the boys about how they'd put up a good fight all year and if they lost he wouldn't think any the less of them. I got a look at young Whitfield and he was pale as a ghost, and his lips kept twitching. He was a good kid, but this was much too big an assignment for him. He'd probably walk the first two or three guys to face him and that would be the end of Cap's careful planning.

WELL, we were just starting out onto the field when the club house door opened and a man walked in. I damn near let out a yell when I saw him because it was the gray-haired fellow who had shouted at Havens from the box the day he walked out.

"I wonder if I could have a word with you, Mr. Roark," he said to Cap.

"It's just game time," Cap said. "I—"

"It's about Havens," said the gray-haired man.

Cap's eyes had a sudden look of hope in them. "Come into my office," he said.

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They didn't ask me, but I went anyway. As soon as the door was closed I pointed at the stranger.

"I know you," I said.

He gave me a kind of a dry smile and reached into his pocket. When he pulled it out he had a little silver disk in his hand. "My name is Connally," he said. "Department of Justice agent."

"Good Lord!" Cap groaned. "Don't tell me Havens ran out because he hadn't paid his income tax or something?"

Connally shook his head. "Mr. Roark," he said, "unless I'm very much mistaken, this man who calls himself Mike Havens and who has been your star pitcher all summer is really a guy named John Michaels. Ever hear of him?"

Something popped inside my head. "John Michaels! You don't mean—"

Connally nodded. "You're right," he said. "John Michaels, notorious gunman and bank robber."

"Good Lord!" said Cap, and folded up like a punctured balloon.

"I've been on his trail for two years," said Connally grimly. "He gave me the complete slip about six months ago and I've never been able to pick up his trail again. The other day I dropped in up here to see a ball game and I saw Havens warming up. Something about him reminded me of Michaels. I shouted at him, and he took one look at me and scrammed. Even then I wasn't sure, but the fact that he's pulled a fade-out on you just about convinced me."

"Good *Lord!*" said Cap, because there wasn't anything else to say.

"I don't get it," I said. "This guy Havens is a real ball player. He's the goods."

"So was Michaels," said the government man. "He went to a little college in Colorado and for four years he stood all the big Western universities on their ears. There were a dozen Big League scouts after him at the time, but he turned down baseball as a career and went into business—the business of bank robbing!"

"Good Lord!" Cap mumbled.

"But why should he have tried to get a job with us?" I said. It still seemed goofy. "Why run such a terrible risk?"

"Was it such a risk?" said Connally. "It was damn smart. Instead of hiding out like a rat he makes himself a nationally famous figure under another name. I never dreamed that Havens was my man—till I saw him. Even then I wasn't sure. If he had held his ground and hadn't run I think he would have bluffed me into thinking it was a coincidence." Connally looked at me with a smile. "I read in your article yesterday the mysterious way in which Havens always concealed where he lived. You see, he wouldn't dare risk big hotels because every house detective in the country had a description of him."

"What's the rap hanging over him?" I asked.

"Five years," said Connally grimly. "So I don't think you'll see your star pitcher again, Mr. Roark."

"Good Lord!" said Cap, in a very small voice.

CHAPTER V.

THE BIGGEST SURPRISE.

WELL, there was nothing to do but go out and watch the Sox take their licking. Not that I could think about much else but Connally's extraordinary disclosure.

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The stadium was jammed. The Corsairs were already taking their pregame practice, and they were a swell-looking bunch, knocking the cover off the ball in their batting practice. They certainly looked different from our bunch, who seemed to be tense and kind of jittery. The Corsairs' infield had plenty of zip in their workout, but our boys handled the ball as though it had thorns on it. Finally the pitchers went out to warm up, Russell looking smooth and easy and powerful.

Poor Whitfield! His nerves were so shot that he could hardly throw the ball up to McKee, who was his warm-up catcher. He was wild as a hawk and kept dropping the ball when McKee tossed it back to him. Cap, tight-lipped, watched him and then signalled to Bat Stallings to go out under the stands and warm up. Cap didn't want the kid to know he'd given up on him, but he didn't want to be unprepared.

And then it was game time. I don't think there were five suckers in all those yelling thousands who would have bet a nickel on the Sox when they saw the pitching selection. Whitfield went out to the mound and threw a few pitches to Doc Sullivan and then the ump shouted "Play ball."

Devens, Clark, Scully and Walker, the Corsairs' first four hitters were all up out of their dugout, waving a couple of bats apiece and yammering at young Whitfield. Devens stepped up in the batter's box and the game was on.

Whitfield's first pitch went about thirty-five feet over his head and up into the wire screen. Lord, I felt sorry for that youngster. It was almost criminal for Cap to put him in such a spot, but there was nothing else he could do. Doc walked out and tried to steady the kid, but it didn't do much good and he walked Devens on four straight pitches.

The fans began to chant the old hook chant. "Take him out! Take him out!" Whitfield's face looked white even from where I was sitting. He uncorked another wild pitch and Devens went down to second. Three more balls and he'd walked Clark.

Up came Scully, one of the most murderous hitters in the league. The Corsairs were all hammering their bats on the dugout steps and yelling. Whitfield looked over kind of helplessly at Cap, but Cap was sitting tight. I guess he wanted to give Bat a minute or two more to warm up before he derricked the kid.

Another wild pitch! Devens and Clark moved up to second and third. At that precise point a shout went up from the crowd the like of which you never heard. For a minute I couldn't locate what it was all about, and then I saw. Through the exit gate in right field had come two figures. One of them was dancing around like a frisky colt. That was Bobby Roark. The other walked along beside him, looking neither to right nor left, tall and rugged in his baseball uniform. It was Silent Mike!

I COULDN'T believe my own eyes! Was this guy utterly crazy to come back here where he'd surely be nabbed—with five years facing him—just to pitch a ball game? Or had Connally been wrong? Was Mike Havens really not John Michaels, the bandit? Was there some other explanation for his disappearance?

Cap rushed out from the bench and held up the ball game. He gave young Whitfield the sign that he was through. Havens came across to the first base coaching line where Cap was standing. His steely gray eyes looked straight into Cap's.

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"You want me to pitch?" he asked.

"Good Lord!" said Cap. "Havens! You...are you..."

"I'm ready to go!" Havens said grimly.

"You know what you are doing?" Cap demanded.

"Perfectly," said Havens, in a sharp, clipped voice.

"Then go!" said Cap. "I'll take a chance on it."

The place was bedlam when Silent Mike walked out to the hill. Young Bobby trotted out to give him a final slap on the back.

"You can take 'em, Mike," he said.

Mike looked down at him with a curious sort of tight-lipped smile. "Don't worry, kid, I'll take 'em for you," he said.

He sauntered coolly to his place on the rubber and began to warm up with that loose, easy motion of his. Thousands of throats were bursting with cheers at that moment. The intensely partisan crowd saw a chance for their home team to pull through after all. Cool as ice was Havens or Michaels or whatever his name was. When the ump signaled him to go he looked around at the score board, saw that the count was one ball on Scully, glanced for a moment at Devens and Clark who were dancing off second and third, and set himself to start. The Corsairs were still pounding their bats on the cement and shouting, but somehow it didn't sound quite so hearty as it had. Then Silent Mike began to pitch.

I think in the next hour and fifty minutes I lost ten years off my life. Somehow from the moment that first pitch smacked into Doc Sullivan's mitt with the sound of a small cannon going off, I knew the answer. This was a different Havens than I'd seen before. Grim-lipped, with eyes hard and cold as diamonds, looking like a killer, somehow. Maybe it was imagination. Maybe I was nuts. But somehow I knew that Connally was right. This man was John Michael, the bandit. But why in the name of God had he come back?

"Sturrrike!" bawled the ump on that first pitch.

A roar from the crowd—a full-throated roar of triumph. Silent Mike was on the job, with all his terrific speed, all his sharp breaking curves, all the equipment that had made him the leading pitcher in the league that year. He fanned Scully. He fanned Walker. He got Marriot, the next hitter, to pop up and the inning was over with no damage resulting from Whitfield's terrible start.

My fingernails were biting into the palms of my hands. Would Connally and his men appear now and make an arrest before seventy thousand yelling maniacs? What a story that would be! But it didn't happen—not then.

The players on the Sox bench were changed men. They were all grinning and laughing and full of fight. Only Cap knew about Mike, because he had thought it best not to tell the players before the game. Would take their minds off the job at hand. Mike said nothing himself. Just sat there, grim-lipped, while our side was at bat. Little Bobby sat beside him, a Cheshire cat grin on his face, his arm slipped through the big pitcher's—the pitcher who was a bank robber and a potential killer! God!

THEN Mike went back to pitch, and how he pitched! It was as if he had a pent-up, vicious hatred for each one of those Corsairs as they came to bat. He poured liquid fire at them. He tantalized them with a floating slow ball. His curve broke sharp-

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ly away from their bats. If they crowded the plate he drove them back with a dangerous dust-off pitch.

Inning after inning he mowed them down in one-two-three order. If anything, as the game wore on he seemed to have more stuff. That burning hard one blazed past the hitters, hurled by a man who seemed to be consumed by some sort of grim fury. And I waited ...waited for Connally to make his move. If he hadn't stayed at the ball park surely he must know that Havens was pitching. It would be on the streets in extras downtown. Every ticker tape in the city would be carrying the news. Mike must have known this. Why had he come back? Why walk into a five-year jail sentence just to pitch this game?

Well, even if it was the last game he would ever pitch, it was no ordinary one. He had everything that afternoon. He seemed able to give each succeeding pitch just a little more than had gone on the last one. By the time the first half of the eighth rolled around we had nicked Russell for three runs and Havens had a no-hit game in the making. And he made it. I don't think the last six batters even saw the ball as it burned past them. I've seen Johnson and Grove and Vance and a lot of other fast ball pitchers in my time, but I've never seen anything like the speed Silent Mike had that afternoon.

I had made my way down from the press box to one of the exit gates, and when he fanned Clark for the last out, completing a perfect no-hit, no-run, no-man-reach-first performance from the time he took up the burden, I rushed out on the field ahead of the howling mob that was swarming out to acclaim this man who had pitched his way into the hall of fame and won a pennant for his club. All the players were running for the club house, and I sprinted after Mike and managed to catch up with him.

"Connally's been here," I panted.

He gave me a funny look. "Yeah, I know," he said.

Somehow I had an unlawful urge to see him get away. A man who could pitch a game like that! But he made straight for the club house, and as we burst into the locker room there sat Connally, puffing calmly at a charred briar pipe. Mike gave him one look and then said, rather sharply:

"Come into Cap's office, will you, Connally?"

Connally nodded and got up. Mike grabbed me and Cap, literally pushed us into the office ahead of him, and locked the door. "I want to talk this out before you guys spill your story," he said.

Connally puffed on his pipe. "It's all right by me, Michaels," he said. A funny smile flickered across his lips. "A guy who can pitch a ball game like that deserves some consideration."

Cap looked at his star pitcher. "You *are* John Michaels?"

"That's right, Cap," said Silent Mike grimly.

"Good Lord!" said Cap in that funny, punctured way.

OUTSIDE the office a howling mob was yelling for Havens. Everybody wanted to shake his hand. Everybody wanted him to autograph something. The greatest pitching performance in years. And here sat the man who had done it, a confessed bandit. He looked at me, eyes hard, glittering.

"Do you have to break this story?" he asked. "Won't it be sensation enough to have me walk out after this

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game and never show up again? Does everyone have to know that I'm John Michaels?"

"How can it be helped?" I asked.

"Connally won't talk, will you, Connally?" Mike urged. "You can just say you picked me up here in town. Nobody will know that John Michaels was Mike Havens?"

"I guess it wouldn't be necessary to make it public," said Connally thoughtfully. "But you'll break this man's heart if you don't let him print it."

"The hell with his heart," said Michaels harshly. "I'm thinking of a heart that *would* be broken. That kid—" He broke off for an instant. "Why the hell do you think I came back here and put my head in a noose this afternoon? Do you think it was for the good of the game? Do you think it was just so the Sox would win a pennant? The hell with all that. It was on account of the kid!"

"What happened?" I asked.

John Michaels had a funny bright look in his eyes, suspiciously bright. "I—well, I knew I couldn't pitch again," he said, "but I *did* want to see how the club came out. I was pretty sure Connally would figure that I'd skipped town after seeing him in the stands that day. I figured he'd think the ball park was the last place in the world he'd be likely to find me."

"You're right there," said Connally, puffing placidly on his pipe. "I got the word that you were pitching from a news ticker down town."

"But I didn't come back to pitch," said Michaels. "I was just going to sit in the bleachers and watch the game." He laughed, a humorless laugh. "Well, it turned out to be a tough break for me, in a way, that decision. Just as I was going in the bleacher entrance I ran smack into Bobby Roark. He didn't realize I was headed for the stands, he was so excited. He thought I was on the way to the club house."

"'Mike, Mike!' he cried. 'I knew you'd show up! I *knew* it! Everybody said you were yellow, and a quitter, but I knew you weren't. I told them you'd turn up.'

"Well, I tried to mumble some excuse—something about not being able to pitch. Honestly, you've never seen such a look on a human face as was on his. It was as if somebody had turned off a light inside him. He stared at me, and I thought for a minute he was going to fall right down on the pavement, the way he was hanging onto my arm.

"'Mike!' he said. 'You don't mean you *are* going to throw me down?'"

MICHAELS reached over and took a cigarette from a package on Cap's desk, and his fingers shook a little when he lit it. "I'm not a very sentimental guy," he said. "But somehow I had a picture of what the whole rest of my life was going to be. I might be able to give Connally the dodge for years, but I'd always have to be letting someone down because the trail would be getting too hot. Right then I'd decided I'd take my medicine so that I'd never have to let a kid like him down again—or anyone else for that matter." He laughed. "Once I'd decided that, I thought I might as well begin now. So I went with Bobby to the club house and got ready to pitch."

"Good Lord!" said Cap thickly. "Five years in the cooler just to—"

"Just so I could start looking people in the eye again," said Michaels, sharply. "It's not as goofy as it sounds, Cap, but you wouldn't know because

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you've always been on the square." He reached in his hip pocket and produced a baseball and wrote something on it with Cap's fountain pen.

"Give this to the kid," he said. "It's the ball I fanned Clark with for the last out. And have the locker boy bring my stuff in here. When I'm dressed, Connally and I will slip out the back way."

Cap seemed unable to move. "Would you like to see Bobby before...?" he asked.

Michael's voice was harsh. "No," he said. "I'd rather be remembered as I was out there this afternoon—when I didn't let him down."

Cap gave him a curious look. "I guess he wouldn't think so poorly of you, Mike—even if he knew the truth."

And that was just what I had been thinking.

THE END

The Lost Blarney Stone

ALTHOUGH ruined Blarney Castle near Cork with its 120-foot tower is famous as being the location of the Blarney Stone, no one knows which stone it is. Several years ago, those in charge of the castle concluded that it was a massive block in a wall angle some twenty feet from the top. This block is inscribed with the name of the builder—Cormack MacCorthy—and the date A.D. 1446. The only way anyone could kiss it was to be let down on ropes through a hole in the rickety battlement.

This was dangerous, but so many wanted to make the dangle that the village council hastily picked another stone, one dated 1703. Since this was only a few feet below the parapet, the aspirant to a magic tongue had only to be held by the feet while he hung over forty yards of space.

Unfortunately, several lives were lost. The 1703 stone was pulled out and placed at the top of the tower, where it remained until shoved off by a tourist who thought he was being funny. However, the idea of hanging by the feet had taken hold of people's imagination, and the present stone—the third, at least—is reached that way. There must be magic in such a stone.

—*J. W. Holden.*

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"On to Texas!" was the cry along the open trail which led to silver mines, slaves, acres of free land—and war

Bowie Knife

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

Author of "The Sphinx Strikes," "Riley Dillon, Masquerader," etc.

CHAPTER I.

"GOING TO TEXAS!"

HUGH KENLY was sitting over his rum in one corner, when snatches of the amazing talk got his attention. This catch-all groggery at one end of the New Orleans waterfront was miscalled the Hotel Beausejour; a rough and roaring place.

The night, of September, 1835, was thick and close; infernally so, thought Kenly. He was drinking down his heartsick disaster and loneliness. He was ripe for anything, careless of everything. The challenge of his

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"We'll tame you proper!"

brown eyes under shaggy brows, of his scarred, hard features, was surly. Heavy jaw, heavy hand, heavy heart. There was none in this guzzling, tobacco-chewing, smoking throng to discern any tender light in those brooding dark eyes, any softer touch of chivalry in his high-boned features. This night weighed upon him frightfully. It frightened him with old memories.

Thick outside and thick inside was the night. Outside, thick with heavy fog that rolled in off the river, up over the levee and the boats, to saturate everything with its swampy, viscous reek. Gutters dripped as with rain. Window lights and the glazed lanterns beaconing the hotel signs glimmered wanly like faces of drowning men. The black sky was low with moist warm air that had met chill river air, so that a man oozed sweat at every pore.

A sullen rumble, born of no apparent horizon, occasionally rolled through space. The air seemed weighted with a menace of quickening events, to Hugh Kenly.

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Had he been up Missouri way, now, he would have been minded of earthquake. This thickness and closeness and rumbling had heralded the big quake along the river below St. Louis in the winter of 1811. Twenty-four years back—well, close to it. Kenly had been scant three years old, yet he remembered the terror of it, and had heard many yarns.

Yet this night registered memories far more poignant, more bitter, and more recent. Memories that caused him to reach again for the rum flask, with an oath.

Inside the groggery it was thick, not only with the fog but with fumes of twist tobacco, rum, whisky, dank clothing and bodies. It was murmurous with the undertones of men at drink and at confab. Undertones shot through with lightning of ribald oaths and wild, cocky whoops. Frenchmen, Americans, backwoodsmen, rivermen, Spaniards, halfbreeds, their bodies steaming. And ever the word on all lips was the same: Texas!

Hugh Kenly grunted in disgust, and drained his mug. The ribs, recently mended, encasing his powerful lungs ached. The scars of his healed burns smarted and stung, and the fiery rum failed as medicine for either spirit or body. His only visible scar was the skinned triangle high on the bridge of his nose; a scar that marked him, however.

A steamboat mate without a berth, and with sharp memories. He thought of the snag that had driven through the hull of the *Amos G. Dunn,* exploding her boiler and lifting him halfway to shore with his ribs caved in and his hide scalded. As far as he knew, the steamboat was still hung up on that treacherous sawyer below old Natchez. He himself was still hung up in New Orleans, out of bandages at last, and out of hope to boot, scowling at the world.

A night like this, he mused, thick and clammy as this, with him taking a trick at the wheel on a forced run for a tie-up place. Then—the stars came again and fell and he was in the water. Not to blame for that sawyer, one minute under water, next minute above water; but they had blamed him all the same. Drunk, they had said. Drunk! The damned liars! Well, here was Hugh Kenly, none the less, heaving lead for soundings and finding none, except with the rum. Done for. Finished.

As a snag-end sawing up and down on the river surfaces catches the eye, so the smatterings of talk about him caught his ear. Texas, eh? Texas! There might be something in that, for a broken man. He listened deliberately, attentively.

"Land by the hundred of acres, I tell you, to be had freely!"

"But they say them Mexicans bears down on the settlers mortal bad."

"Cain't come it over Americans, you h'ar me orate? Who's to stop us?"

"No man's trail and every man's trail; that's the truth of it. Horses, trade goods, negroes . . . big profits in smuggling, lemme tell you! Lafitte lands slaves anywheres . . . trading with them Mexicans and—"

The voices died. Others took their places, striking Kenly's ear in curious sequence, unrelated apparently and yet with the snatches of talk rousing interest, provocative.

"Bound to declare for freedom. Americans won't stand being chiseled out'n their rights. No representation any more, and we ain't standing for it—"

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"Volunteers . . . organizing to fight for Texas? Count me in, sure. Any gals for part of the plunder?"

And again, in more cultured tones curious to hear in such surroundings, yet impossible to assign to any certain speaker:

"I tell you, Santa Anna won't admit any state constitution. He's set himself up as dictator. Texas won't hear of such a thing. Now the settlers will have to go the whole hog and cut loose . . . aim at liberty. Liberty, understand?"

"Men enough in the United States to help her do it, too. We can't see our own blood ground down . . . new country thrown open. Mines, too, I hear. Silver mines . . ."

Provocative, yes, to a broken man. Kenly glanced around.

The room, murky with smoke and fog, was fairly large, its muddied plank floor occupied by chipped and stained deal tables crowded with sitters in leather, wool, and homespun. This was the front room of the two-storied hotel. Back along the hall extended other rooms devoted to sundry purposes, and on the second floor were lodgings. Hugh Kenly would not sleep here tonight, however. He was down to his last sou; or, in the local parlance, his last picayune.

Again and again his eyes drifted curiously to the table in that countering corner by this rear wall, beyond the threshold of the hallway. Three men sat there, bent forward in low and secretive poise. There were two profiles, and a back. Why they attracted him, Kenly did not know; unless it was that they were niched off there to themselves in a defensive manner. They appeared to be intent upon certain objects laid on the table, which they examined and discussed.

So intent was Kenly's gaze that it was noticed; the man of the back turned suddenly about and regarded Kenly with a cold, who-the-devil-are-you sort of stare. A slender man, yet muscular and square-shouldered, in short, lapelled jacket, linen roll collar and planter's black hat. The face leaped out at Kenly angrily.

A smooth countenance flanked by dark hair down either temple; a countenance marked by bold, challenging blue eyes. The straight nose and straight determined lips, the broad forehead, denoted plainly enough a masterful man, one who might be the noblest of friends and the deadliest of enemies. No one would forget him, and those stark blue eyes would forget no one.

IN his prickle of resentment under that blue stare, Kenly was relieved by a more friendly salute, as a man came to his table and kicked out one of the stools, and spoke in soft Spanish.

"With your permission, *señor?* Good evening to you."

A Spaniard, this, or Mexican, enveloped in a serape; by his barb, of the lower class, with a strongly pock-marked face, yet not unpleasing. He had come with velvet step and seated himself with feline grace. Now he smiled on Hugh Kenly.

"You are alone, *señor?* You speak the Spanish?"

"A little," returned Kenly, by no means glad of the intrusion.

"*Bueno!* I thought you were alone, *señor.* You are not of these others; they are not your friends?" and the speaker swept his hand toward the room.

Kenly eyed him dourly. "I don't know them, nor you either."

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"Good, good! Then you are not 'for Texas,' as their saying goes."

Kenly laughed curtly, savagely. "I'm for an honest job, *amigo*. Anywhere. If that's being for Texas, then I call the main, and devil take who likes it or doesn't!"

Unconsciously, his voice had lifted. Again the blue-eyed man had looked his way, other faces were turned. The pockmarked man leaned forward earnestly. He began to speak rapidly, as though rattling off something he had learned.

"I, too, am an honest man, *señor;* these people are fools. When they talk of Texas, to them it rains packsaddles. They think in miracles! *Señor,* Texas is a part of Mexico and remains so. Those *Americanos* who go in there to plunder and fight will be no more than outlaws, men without a country."

An ironic grunt broke from Kenly. "Maybe they'll take a country, my friend."

"Bah! The United States will not protect pirates who come from its own borders," rattled on the other. "Mexico will deal with them, and with all in Texas who rebel against her. There is a great man in Mexico now! Santa Anna is president and general, Mexico is now one people—and welcomes the brave and honest. What does your heart desire, *señor?* Money, honors, women? Listen, *señor;* a fire is discovered by its own light. Let me lead you to one who—*diablo!* Your servant, *señor;* we shall meet again, later—"

Even as he spoke, he was gone. Gone with the agile spring of a startled buck.

He disappeared into the hallway and was lost to sight. In his place loomed another figure, bulking out the smoky lights.

"Stranger, my compliments!"

With scrape of legs, the stool was again occupied, and Hugh Kenly stared at the taker. No Spaniard here. Quite the contrary, in fact.

A swart, black-haired, shrewd-eyed man, to be sure, but withal a beak-nosed man, Indian-visaged, in coon-skin cap and fringed buckskin; a white man who carried a prodigiously long and silver-mounted rifle, leaning it against the table.

"Friend of your'n?" and he nodded in the direction of the vanished Mexican.

"First met, sir, the same as yourself," said Kenly, who was beginning to be amused. He was not certain whether to be angry or interested in this visitor; his amusement was apt to a swift and irritable change. Other faces were again turned in this direction.

"Meaning I'm barking up the wrong tree?" inquired this backwoodsman, with so ingratiating and honest a smile that Kenly's irritation melted.

"I wouldn't say that," he rejoined. "You're welcome to poor company if you like it, stranger."

"As the coon in the tree said to the hound in the canebrake," observed the other, with a whimsical twitch of his long, square chin. "Well, I expect poor company may be better than none, seeing as you just had it afore I come. I don't ask you to kick afore you're spurred, but we may's well go straight ahead. I'm delegated to inquire how you are on the G.T.T., stranger."

"Gone to Texas, eh?" Kenly had picked up enough talk to know what these initials meant in local parlance. "Well, my friend, you can see for yourself. I haven't gone." The other chuckled.

"Neat as a possum's tail. That's

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sufficient, as Tom Haynes said when he saw the elephant. You don't need to cover up on me, stranger. I'm Davy Crockett from Tennessee, seeing the sights with Betsy, here," and he patted the long rifle affectionately. "Not gone to Texas—Going To Texas! There's a motto to hang on your door, blast my old shoes if it ain't! You're a likely feller; what d'you say? Another horn of liquor, and the honor's mine! Will you crack the heads of a few dons for the sake of liberty?"

CROCKETT from Tennessee? Hugh Kenly had heard the name; everyone had heard of the deadly shooting Tennesseean.

"Well, why not?" he answered. "I'm flattened out and open to a berth of any paying kind. What's the offer?"

"To go with me to Texas," said Crockett.

"With you?" Kenly's dark eyes lit up suddenly.

"Right you are," said Crockett. "Dog me if I don't know a man when I see one! I'm here to talk with Jim Bowie and get the news. He's busy right now, but I'll fetch him over when he comes back. He's a high-toned gentleman, fresh out of Texas, and can argufy with you better'n Davy Crockett, any day."

Crockett stretched out his legs comfortably. Kenly had him spotted now. One of the three men from that corner table. He glanced over at it, and found the table empty. The man with the hot blue eyes had disappeared.

"Y'know," went on Crockett, "Jim's the popularist man in that there country, and a screamer in a fight. The way he laid into them Injuns when he was looking for his silver mine was something to holler about."

"Silver mine?" repeated Hugh Kenly, blankly.

"Yep. Somewhere in Texas. He's rich enough already, but it'll make him richer than a congressman if he can find it again," and Crockett exploded in a laugh. "Me, I been in congress, and the most I got out of it was a trip on them new railroad cars. Seventeen mile in fifty-five minutes—yes, sir! Hell in harness, as the feller said when his horses run away. Well, what was I talking about?"

"Jim Bowie."

"Oh, sure! Him and his mine. The cowards would give a pretty penny to get the gouge holt on that mine! But Jim'll talk Texas to you till the trail's as plain as a b'ar's path in a canebrake. If you want to travel with Davy Crockett, you and me can 'list in the cause of liberty together."

"If I want to!" exclaimed Kenly eagerly. "Why, Colonel Crockett, I—"

At this instant he heard a scream, echoing down the dark hallway.

There had been other voices of womankind, voices both gay and angry, bruited through these entertainment-precincts of the shaggy little hotel. These ribaldries had been an accepted feature of the evening. But this single note of frantic appeal startled him—though no one else seemed to notice it.

Kenly leaped to his feet, darted into the hall, and went plunging along, guided only by the threads of light glimmering through the cracks of the warped and loosely fitted doors to either hand. At the hall's end, however, there was a broader slant of yellow light that beckoned him on.

As he sped away, he heard roars of laughter from the big room behind, at some sally from Davy Crockett. Then

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he heard sounds ahead, also. His senses focused upon the scuffle and stamp of feet, the gusty oaths and laughs of men, the quick desperate cries of a woman. All coming from that slant of light, as though it were a signal of distress.

The door stood ajar, and coming to it, Kenly shouldered it aside and burst in.

The room, as revealed by a tipsy lamp in a wall bracket, was in a wild disorder of upset table and stools. All in a flashing glance, Hugh Kenly caught the full gist of it. The Spaniard with the pockmarked face lying senseless in one corner; an old woman, huddled against the wall and piping frantically. Two men wrestling with and wresting at a young woman—one man leather-capped, in greasy river-jerkin, a faded kerchief knotted about his neck; the other a blazing carrot-thatch, cursing furiously.

Then Kenly saw the woman, young, of bright hair and pale angry lips parted over clenched teeth. Her upper dress was torn. Her hand gripped a knife, but carrot-thatch held it high and useless as she strained and fought the two men.

"The she-devil! Gouge her!"

"We'll tame you proper—"

"*Señor,* help, help me!" shrilled her voice, as she saw Kenly there in the doorway.

The straight appeal was explanation enough; the answer was swift.

Kenly's right arm crooked about the kerchief and throat of the jerkined man, his bent knee jammed into the fellow's spine. To a drag and a twist, the rascal went reeling to fall all asprawl outside the doorway. Kenly caught up a stool for weapon, but stood holding it.

For, her knife-hand released, the young woman lashed out viciously. A wild oath burst from carrot-thatch; then, his retreat cut off by Kenly, he went headfirst through the crashing window.

"Behind you, *señor*—behind you!"

THE woman's voice brought Kenly around, stool in hand. Things were dim and dazed. The room wavered in the flickers of the draft-blown lamp. The woman, the shadows, the lust of combat, the thick dust from the stamped floor, were in his eyes.

That looming figure in the doorway—the man he had flung out, of course! Kenly leaped, and the stool in his hand whirled.

"What's the matter in here—"

The voice was keen and hard, level, impetuous. It died out under the crash of the heavy stool, as the edge of the wood thudded home.

Too late, too late! Kenly could not halt the blow, though he realized his mistake in that frightful moment. Nor could the swiftly uplifted arm of the other man parry it. For an instant Kenly recoiled under the stabbing blaze of those stark blue eyes. Something clattered and fell across the floor, from that upflung arm. Then the intruder pitched forward, full length, to lie face down and without movement.

"He has it! He has it!" The cry came from the young woman. "Now we must be quick, quick!"

She hurled herself forward, caught at the door, slammed it shut and ran home the bar. Then she whirled around.

Outside and in had fallen silence, save for the rapid panting of the younger woman as she eyed Kenly, and the babblings of the crone huddled

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in fear and trembling against the wall.

The lamp had steadied now. Its flame rose full and bright. Kenly's vision came clear again. He could scarce believe her real, in this his first intelligent view of her. Shaken over her shoulders, her hair gleamed like silken floss of gold. Her wide eyes were the hue of the bluebird at mating time, her lips were vivid red, her skin was very white, and soft to the sight. She was all whiteness, softness, ruddy tenderness, save for the knife that glittered cold in her hand. No less a woman than a girl.

"Ah, *señor,* thanks, a thousand thanks!" Her breath still came fast, her breasts were heaving under the torn, rent stuff of her gown. "These ruffians, these Americans, they would have—ah, Matilde! Quick! And you, *señor*—we must go, we must go before those others return. Matilde!"

This to the crone, who now scrambled forward hurriedly.

"A thousand curses on them!" she breathed. "Look at the pretty stone—this one, that fell from his hand! So he would pay us by throwing it at my feet, eh?" And hideous laughter cackled from her lips, as she gathered up a bit of rock from the floor. It was this that had clattered down, ere the intruder fell.

Swiftly, the girl flung herself upon the prostrate figure, while Kenly stared.

"True, true! He may have more, then. Help me, *señor!* Help me turn him over, before others come. Search him, Matilde!"

Kenly lent a hand. They turned the still figure upon its back, and the features stared up at them with bold and fixed blue eyes. The eyes, and the deadly, oozing bruise upon the uncovered forehead! Kenly started back with a sudden chill from the look of those accusing eyes, eyes well remembered, eyes that had not forgotten. Yes, this was the man of the blue eyes, the fine garments, the hat that now lay crushed on the floor. Then Kenly felt the girl clutch his arm.

"You have killed him, *señor;* no time now—with me, quickly, or you also are dead. Make haste, Matilde."

The crone, Matilde, had made deft and swiftly accomplished search. Now she tottered up from her knees with a wild flutter of old laughter.

"The very man indeed, my pet. A knife, tucked under his shirt. This bit of paper. A few coins. I thought so great a man would be richer by far. The knife for you, *señor?*"

Mechanically, Hugh Kenly accepted the heavy knife thrust into his hand.

"I did not mean to strike him down," he muttered, stammering out the words. "I thought he was the other—"

SUDDENLY his senses, still dulled by the rum, awoke. He became aware of breaking tumult outside; voices were sounding, feet were trampling, and there came a hammering thud of fists at the door, with deep resounding shouts to open.

"With me, *señor!*" The girl caught at his arm. Kenly looked at her.

"Where?"

"I'll show you. Come."

"But this man here?" He indicated the senseless Mexican of the pock-marked face, the man who had spoken to him at the table.

"Bah! Only a peon. Leave him for them to kill."

"I will not."

The girl had snatched up a cloak and was throwing it around her shoulders. The old woman had darted to an un-

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seen, flush, small door in the farther side of the room, a door contrived for secret use. Matilde disappeared, the girl following hurriedly.

Leave the man for them to kill? With a grunt, Kenly stooped and lifted. For some reason he liked that pockmarked fellow. The man was half conscious. At first he feebly resisted, then lent himself to the effort. He got the man through the little door, and instantly the girl, who was waiting, slammed and locked it.

"Follow!"

Somehow he stumbled through the darkness with the weight of pock-face, and emerged into a muddy lane, thick with the moist night and the fog.

The flitting glimmer of the girl's white ankles below her cloak could just be seen. This, and the stressed whinneys of the crone, whose legs were better than her lungs, provided guidance. Their steps were sped by the growing, gathering clamor of voices and angry shouts behind.

The lane was long and crooked. It brought them into a street. Save for the few sickly lights above entrance ways and behind dingy panes, the street was dark and lifeless. The girl, with the crone at her heels, led on, brushing close against the fronting buildings while her slippers clicked upon the cobbles.

Abruptly, she turned into an entrance, her cloak whipping from sight beneath the grilled light. The old woman scuttled after, nimbly enough. Kenly followed, only half-supporting the supposed Spaniard, who was manfully working his legs now.

A paved court was overlooked by a railed balcony, soft lights burning dimly. Kenly followed the others up a stairway which brought him to the balcony. Ahead, the girl had halted at a door scrolled with iron-work, rapping repeatedly, quickly.

"It is I, Rodrigo! Open, open!"

The door flung back, and she slipped through upon a shaft of light. The hag followed. Kenly guided in his peon, and as he did so, the girl shut the door and shot a bolt.

"Well, my cousin, all is over," said the girl calmly. She caught up a chair, brought it over to the fire, and seated herself, thrusting soggy slippers to the blaze. "Heavens, what an escape!"

Then she burst into laughter, as Kenly stood gaping at the scene which met his eye.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAP.

IT was, indeed, a strange scene that greeted Hugh Kenly, by contrast to that which he had so recently left. Yet he was not the only one to stand in staring surprise.

In New Orleans, this city half-Spanish and half-French, such a room was not uncommon, with its glittering old furniture, carved tables, ornate chandelier, dressed cowhide rugs upon the floors and heavy brocaded curtains covering the windows. In a wide hearth blazed a warm and ruddy fire, grateful to see despite the steaming moisture of the night; its warmth, at least, was good honest warmth. The cloudy marble mantlepiece held various knickknacks.

On the central table was a tray of food, with glasses and a large decanter of wine.

The duenna, if such were the old crone, huddled at one side of the fireplace, babbling thanks to the saints. The peon, for he seemed to be rather a peon of humble birth than any proud

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Spaniard, leaned against the wall. Kenly caught his mumble.

"I will remember, *señor*. You have saved me; I will remember."

The American paid no heed, for he was looking at the startled man, surprised by their abrupt entry.

This man had been seated at a writing desk against the wall. He, very obviously, was a true Spaniard. A man of thirty, well-favored, albeit of eyes a little close, of ruddy olive complexion, aquiline features, thin-bridged nose. His black mustache turned up from full lips, his chin was deeply cleft, and curly black hair framed his visage. He wore an embroidered black velvet jacket over a fine linen shirt, a yellow waist sash, and boots of soft leather, fancifully stitched, coming above the knees. A fine fellow, this Spaniard, and his black eyes reminded Kenly of the knife still in his hand.

The soft laughter of the girl broke upon the silence.

"Well, Rodrigo, you might ask the *señor* to sit down! I do not have his name, so introductions must wait. You are not hospitable, good c o u s i n! What, food and wine to hand, and you offer us none, when this *señor* has saved us all?"

She laughed again, as in soft mockery. She had stowed her hair in a glossy pile, and now sat, luxurious as a basking cat, all unconcerned over her torn upper garment. She was not unmindful of certain effects, as Kenly could dimly sense.

The man Rodrigo was obviously disconcerted by Kenly's presence, a prey to awkward uncertainty. At these words from the girl, he seemed to recollect himself. He bowed, and spoke with a certain stiffness.

"Your pardon, Conchita. And yours, *señor*. Surprise, I fear, caused by my unintentional rudeness. Will you be pleased to sit down, *señor?* Before the fire; it is yours. At least it banishes the dampness of this fog-ridden night. For the love of the saints, Pablo, do quit rubbing your head like a jackass against a wall, and take a seat. Pour wine, Matilde."

About the man was a briskness, a hearty quality, which invited no denial.

"Yes, my captain," Pablo faltered. He gingerly perched on the edge of a chair and held his head between his hands. An aching, thrumming head, no doubt. The old woman began to pour wine from the decanter into the glasses.

Kenly, with a nod, seated himself at the end of the fireplace opposite the girl. She fascinated him. This warmth was grateful to his aching ribs; but the warmth that pervaded him was not all from the fire.

The girl—Conchita, the Spaniard had called her—threw glances at him. Her hands arranged stray tendrils of her hair with deft touches, her eyes insisted that he appraise her. Above small slippers, her ankles were slender and shapely. The flash of her white skin, the lovely curve of her cheek and throat, the slight smile resting upon those red lips, the deep blue of her eyes framed in long lashes and crescent brows, the amazing pile of amber sunset hair—yes, she was worth looking at, this girl.

Hugh Kenly became conscious of his harsh garb of riverman. He bethought himself to lay down the knife and cover it with his hat; it was out of place here, at a hearth which seemed domestic.

A suspense was in the air, a sensation of waiting, as though no one dared be the first to speak. Matilde

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was handing about the glasses of wine. Rodrigo pulled up a chair and seated himself. The girl took her glass. She poised it, with glance aside and the quick, half-mocking utterance: "To Mexico, *señor!*" She brought the glass to her lips, a smile flashing forth at Kenly.

He tasted the wine, making no other reply. The tang of the rich, molten gold was grateful to his throat. The smile from her lips warmed him, permeated him with a friendliness, a promise of cheer. Then, abruptly, the wrinkled old woman shattered the silence with her senile, evil twitter.

"There, my captain; I wiped every glass with my skirt. You can trust old Matilde! I was not well brought up for nothing. And now see what I have for you; it will gladden your heart, my captain! Here, from my pocket; this, and this. You see the treasure, my captain? I cannot read the paper, but I know what it is, and I can read the pretty stone, for that talks plainly enough."

Thus saying, she fished out the piece of rock and the folded square of paper taken from the dead man, if indeed he were dead. She laid them under Rodrigo's nose and stood back triumphant, a grin splitting her toothless face.

"What the devil! What nonsense is here, you old witch?" broke out the captain, his wine still untasted. "There is much to explain, true, but you make a poor beginning. Come, Conchita! What is the meaning of all this absurdity?"

Matilde took the word and bristled.

"Absurdity indeed!" she squawked out in shrill anger. "I have just told you the wine won't poison you, and neither will these things. If the captain will finger the rock and look into the paper, he will count this night the most blessed of his life. He calls me names, eh? Well, one who finds he cannot bite should not show his teeth."

SUCH sayings were the stock in trade of all Spanish folk. Don Rodrigo grunted in response, and turned the rock over in his hand. He put teeth to it and wiped his lips. He examined into the paper, and sat back in his chair, frowning.

"Well, devil take you! What's the answer?"

"*Plata bruta*—pure ore of silver," and old Matilde almost snarled the words in her excitement. "And that paper should be a map."

"Well? What of it?" demanded the other, staring at her.

"What of it? The mines of San Saba lie in your hand, little general, and you say what of it?" Shrill laughter put mockery into her words. "I know. I have had ore like this in my hands before; but not enough to fill a cart. Anyway, both the ore and the map come from the right place, the right man. It is San Saba silver—is it not, my little one?"

She turned, appealing swiftly to the girl, who merely shrugged and nodded.

"San Saba! The San Saba mines? Holy saints!" Now excitement seized upon the captain, and no mistake. He tossed off his wine and thrust the glass on the table. "I do not believe it. You are trying to jest with me, all of you—come! Let's have an explanation of all this—who is this *señor,* whence come this ore and paper?"

Without pause for answer, he turned to Kenly.

"*Señor,* pardon my remissness. I am Captain Don Rodrigo Estremadura. The lady is my cousin, Doña Maria de la Concepcion Villamar. And you?"

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"My name is Kenly—Hugh Kenly. Hugo, in the Spanish."

"Ah, H u g o!" exclaimed Doña Maria, mouthing it prettily as she leaned forward. "It is a brave, harsh name, well fitting a brave man. A brave man is known by his deeds and his scars—a true caballero, my Hugo!"

"Curse your fine phrases!" exclaimed Don Rodrigo, riding the saddle of impatience. "Tell me what happened, do you hear? To the story, and quickly."

"Why, my cousin, two men attacked me—"

"Where was this?"

"In the room at the hotel. Where else? You should know very well."

"What!" cried Don Rodrigo. "I ordered that only one man should be brought to you at a time. How was this, Pablo? You dared to disobey me?"

"Pardon, my captain," said the pock-faced Pablo. "The two *Americanos* were friends and in company. They said it was both or none—how could I prevent them?"

"You're a fool. All right, Conchita; go on."

Doña Maria shrugged. "T h e y struck Pablo down. They were not so much for Mexico as for a pretty face, it proved. They had drunk heavily, and they were ruffians."

One hand touched her knife significantly.

"Two ruffians and using force, you comprehend. And then came Don Hugo. He alone paid heed to my scream; in that place, no one cares what happens. He is a man indeed; He picked up one and actually hurled him out! The other fled through the window. Then in walked a third, and him Don Hugo left lying on the floor with a cracked skull, dead. Beautifully dead, Rodrigo! A pretty blow."

Kenly shivered slightly at her tone, at the memory. That mistaken blow irked him.

"And the pretty stone for proof," cackled old Matilde. "Right at my feet the fine *señor* threw it, for safekeeping while he slept. May he never waken!"

"But the map?" rapped out Don Rodrigo.

"Oh, he gave us that also," and the crone chuckled. "And a fine knife to Don Hugo."

"Plague take you!" broke out Don Rodrigo angrily. "Be done with your cursed riddles; I've no time to bother with them. Speak plainly! Who were the two men?"

"Ruffians, my cousin," said Doña Maria. She spoke now with an Andalusian lisp, which obviously irritated Don Rodrigo. "No matter; they were not for us in any case, though I should have liked to mark them with my knife—"

"The third? He of the map, of this ore?"

"Your wits are slow tonight, Rodrigo. Who should he be, but Don Santiago Bowie?"

"Exactly," and Matilde put in her cackle. "The fine gentleman of the San Saba mines, the rich man, the politician—grr! May he rot in hell!"

"Jim Bowie? That man? No, no! It could not be—"

Kenly's voice rose in wild force as he sprang to his feet, his chair falling back, his wineglass tinkling and shivering on the hearth. The wine spread red like blood at his feet. He stood wide-eyed, astounded, dismayed, a paralysis seizing upon him.

"You did not know?" The girl's brows lifted as she eyed him. "*Dios,* what a blow you struck! It would

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have killed an ox. What matter? You are safe with us."

"DEAD? This *señor* killed that man, that Hercules?" exclaimed Don Rodrigo, no less aghast than Kenly himself. Then his dark eyes warmed, and a smile of delight rushed to his full lips. "The greatest fighter of all the border—dead! This will be good news for *El Presidente*. Señor Bui, dead!" He gave the name its usual pronunciation, alike in both Spanish and English. "The Bowie of the San Saba mines, the traitor to Mexico—and he has given us the mines! Oh, a great stroke, Señor Kenly, and Mexico will reward you well!"

"Bowie!" muttered Kenly. "A traitor, you say? But he was no Mexican."

"But yes," and Don Rodrigo nodded. "A Mexican citizen, *amigo*, like all those who settled in Texas. Pablo! You knew the man. Are you certain it was Bowie?"

The pock-marked Pablo looked up and assented. "Yes, my captain; I did not see him dead, but I knew him in life. He had been in the tavern room, with two other men, examining bits of rock. I said to myself then that it might be a matter of the San Saba treasure; but Don Santiago would be carrying his name-knife."

The knife—the famous type invented by Bowie's brother? The ore and the map? The man at the table with Crockett, those challenging, hot blue eyes? Hugh Kenly groped for his chair again and sank down in it. He saw it all now, with horrible precision. Bowie showing the ore, talking with those other two men. Then the scream, and Bowie, the famous chivalric Bowie, to the room, still holding the ore in his hand. The convulsive release of the ore when the blow fell. A shiver ran through Kenly, a shiver of repulsion, of self-horror. Not at death. He was used to that on the river. But at the hideous mistake which had caused him to kill a man famed throughout the southwest for his noble chivalry no less than for his dreaded fighting ability.

The girl was speaking, and her musing words sank into him.

"Jeem Bowie, yes. I have seen him often enough. Everyone in San Antonio de Bejar knows Jeem Bowie. Did he not marry one of the Veramendi girls, whose father was vice-governor? And he had cotton mills in the south, until cholera carried off his wife and children. A Mexican citizen, of course. Don Hugo, have no fear! Mexico will thank you for ridding her of this traitor, this man who calls himself a Texan."

"That is well said, my heart," commended Don Rodrigo, with a nod of approval. "This Bowie left Bejar to join the plotters here, raising men and money; he was not here for his San Saba mines alone." A short laugh broke from him, as his keen black eyes leaped to the American.

"I do not ask, Señor Kenly, what your own plans may have been; whether you were for the Texas rebels or not, is immaterial now. You are, you must be, to Mexico with us. That is to say, to Bejar. There you are safe, honored, a hero!"

"I have already invited the caballero to listen to us, my captain," proffered the pock-marked Pablo. "I was about to take him back to the room to see Doña Maria and talk with her, but another intervened. Then I picked up those ruffians, and they rushed along with me—"

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"Never mind," and Don Rodrigo waved his hand airily. "Señor Kenly, matters have turned out well for you, marvelously well! There are great things ahead for you. We have many Americans in our army, from generals to drill-sergeants. But for you, also, there are now things to be avoided, since you have killed Jim Bowie, a man of note among his people.

"He has brothers and friends; you cannot go back to that hotel, you cannot venture into the streets. You cannot stay in this part of the United States, and you will assuredly be safe among Americans in Texas. For, *señor,* pardon my reference, but you are a marked man. You bear a scar upon your nose which is unusual, impossible to conceal. Well! Mexico will not only offer you protection, but honors and wealth. *Señor,* to your health."

And Don Rodrigo drained his glass, which old Matilde had refilled. The crone uttered her evil twittering laugh, so shot through with venom, with vindictive malice, that the recurrent sound of its mirth sent a chill down Kenly's spine. He sat there with hopeless realization growing upon him, liking his company less every moment and yet fully conscious that Don Rodrigo spoke the truth.

"The great Don Santiago brought low!" cackled the old woman. "One who they say rode alligators like horses, and picked his teeth with a knife as long as my arm. Ha! Toothless as a cock now is he, but one who was dreaded while living may well be feared after he is dead, my fine *señor* of the marked nose!"

"Shut up," snapped Don Rodrigo. "*Señor,* let us look at this map together. You may help me with this American writing—"

KENLY rose, wakening his sluggard faculties. The captain had pulled up a small table. With heavy head and heavy heart, Kenly joined him there.

His brain was racing the while. How swiftly things had happened; how incredible that he should have killed Jim Bowie, even stricken him down! Jim Bowie, of the brothers made forever popular and respected by their bowie-knife, made more famous by valiant deeds of a kind dear to common talk and hearts!

Kenly saw that he was not to join Davy Crockett on the Texas road. He had sat alone and aloof; he had been observed and regarded suspiciously. The covert Pablo had approached him. Then Crockett, quickly, to sound him out. Opportunity, in that scream, had been wrested from him. And now Bowie, found struck down and rifled, mayhap dead as the girl said! Those two other men in the room would know him again. Damnation, what a coil! Whether or not for Texas, now he was for himself, in deadly peril, and a marked man. Crockett had eyed him well, and those shrewd eyes would know him under any disguise.

Beside Don Rodrigo he bent over the map, translated the few English words and terms showing there. A map carefully drawn, that came clear enough to the eye under the exclamations of the worthy captain.

"Now I see it plainly; look you, Señor Kenly," he said, tracing with well-kept finger; a finger somewhat blunted, but with spade-nail trimmed and polished. "A cross, here. Las Minas de Nuevo Almagres or in your tongue the new Almagres Mines. Plain enough. And here the Rio San Saba—creek, it says, eh? The old San Saba mission should be somewhere

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about. Here mountains, and the trail from Bejar; by marches, seventy leagues. Two hundred miles or so—*pouf!* A mere nothing to hard legs. The ore speaks for itself." He leaned back and looked up at Kenly. "You know of the New Almagres mines, *amigo?*"

Kenly frowned. "Seems to me I heard something about it at Natchez, quite a while back. Some Injun fight, wasn't it?"

"Precisely. Four years ago, in 1831; a famous battle, *señor,* and famous mines. They are almost pure silver, and had been worked by the viceroys of Spain. Miners from Almagres, Mexico, were sent to work them under protection of the San Saba mission, there on the river of the same name, in the Apache country."

"Apaches? I've heard a lot about that," Kenly said, "from the Santa Fe traders at St. Louis. They're devils, by all accounts."

"Devils; may God preserve us from them!" and the good captain signed himself furtively. "Yes. Those red devils, who prefer their patron to God, killed all the miners and put the mission to fire and knife. The mines were lost for many years, the Indians closing all that country. But our Santiago Bowie came into Texas on filibuster business; Lafitte the pirate was his partner, and to better affairs he turned good citizen of Mexico. He had found those mines again, he said, and he led a party of Americans into the Indian country to open them up."

Don Rodrigo twisted his trim mustache and gestured suavely.

"Well, they came back again," he pursued. "He and his party, bringing no silver at all, lucky to bring their lives. Not yet were those mines for Señor Bowie! Now, it is well known to us of Bejar, to General Cos and others, that the valorous *señor* was about to try again. Thanks to the Americans, the Indians are not so strong as once they were. But those mines are not for Texas and the rebellious Texans. They are for Mexico. *Cáspita!* We must go and go at once. You comprehend?"

"We?" Kenly echoed.

"We," and Don Rodrigo smiled. With a gesture of finality, of decision, he folded up the map and pocketed it, with the bit of ore. "The map is ours, the ore is ours; there lies ahead only the trail. You, *señor,* are guest of honor, aid, assistant, friend. You will not be lonely in the service of Mexico, of *El Presidente,* I promise you! If these rebels are raising men, why, so are we. Riflemen, American recruits, to fight fire with fire! Here, Pablo. Your report. You had success?"

The pock-face stood up, with a shambling salute and a grin. Kenly found himself liking the fellow once more. Something resolute and honest and shrewd in that brown, pocked face. Good, sure eyes.

"Yes, my captain. Of those we had seen before, and one or two new ones. As Doña Maria will tell you, we sent them on to the boat. All will not come who promised, of course, but there will be some at least."

"SO it is to be hoped. Go you, at once, and see that the way is clear and those aboard the boat ready. We shall leave immediately. Thanks be to the saints, our affairs here in New Orleans cause no delay! You, Matilde, pack the few things of ours which have not gone to the boat, and pay our bill here at this place. As for you, Don Kenly—"

"And as for me," broke in Doña

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Maria, with a silvery laugh, "I think we may all have a bit more wine. Pity to waste good wine, Rodrigo. Besides, our friend here does not comprehend. There are questions in his eyes. Eh, *señor?*"

"Questions, yes," replied Kenly, frowning slightly. "I don't quite understand it, why I should go, what is there for me. I'm not worried about the rights of it; but fighting against my own people—that's different."

"Ah, no, no!" exclaimed the girl impulsively. "That is not it. Come, Rodrigo; there is no haste to be off. Come, explain to our good *señor,* who has done so much for us!"

Rodrigo nodded, produced a small cigar, and lighted it at a candle. Kenly found his chair again, and the fire, and accepted the glass the girl handed him. She touched her own to it with a little clink. "To the tomorrow!" she murmured, but with her eyes she said; "To our tomorrow!" She seated herself, sipping the wine, with sidelong glances at the two men.

"You shall go with us to Bejar, *amigo,*" said Don Rodrigo. "There is no other way, no better way, for you. I am on the staff of General Cos, commanding at San Antonio of Texas. What am I doing here in New Orleans, and Doña Maria? We are doing what so many Texans are doing, recruiting —but our recruits are for Mexico. We have more to offer, eh, Conchita?"

He broke into a laugh, then his gaze came back to Kenly.

"My friend, Mexico welcomes good citizens. On all who obey her laws she bestows land, privileges, and beautiful women who can be very kind if one has the right touch. Yes, *señor,* we have place for Americans who help us. As for the rebel Texans, what of them?" and he shrugged lightly. "Men without a country, once they rebel. How can they fight Mexico—eight million people, two hundred and fifty thousand soldiers, with the valiant Santa Anna to lead us? And with the savages on their own borders!"

"But are they fighting?" said Kenly, cutting with his cold prosaic query into the bombastic speech. "Fighting has not begun?"

"Even now, perhaps; at any moment the fools may begin! Texas is like the donkey of many owners. The Americans there dispute and fight among themselves. Many among them know that this cause, born of ingratitude, is hopeless. Here, let me read you what one of them says—a *pronunciamento* by Don John Williams—a man of good sense and standing, not one of the riffraff who invite the firing squad!"

From the desk against the wall, Don Rodrigo plucked a printed sheet, moved a candle closer, and read in his precise, clipped English.

"The yawning jaws of a hopeless war . . . so daring, so ungrateful, and so unprovoked . . . to protect the frontiers, to sustain our position against the combined forces of the Mexican United States—O Vanity! O Ignorance! The prey of political jugglers—"

"You see what your own people think?" The reader tucked away the paper with a graceful gesture. "The Texans who so foolishly take up arms will lose all—all! It will not be a war, however. We do not ask that you fight against your own people, *amigo.* We seek you, not as a fighter, but as one to deserve gratitude, as one who gives a great gift, here!" and he slapped the pocket which held the map and the bit of ore.

Kenly reflected grimly that he had

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not given either one. This don was too slick altogether, too glib with his words; yet he was a man to win respect. Now the girl leaned forward. Her voice came softly, warmly, as though for Kenly's ear alone.

"Ah, my Don Hugo! You will find all this and more to be the truth, when we see Bejar. There lies your future, my friend!"

"Assuredly," spoke Don Rodrigo, with his air of grand courtesy. "We take you to Bejar for your own safety, *caballero*. I have shown you how things are in Texas, were you already inclined that way. Further, we owe you a debt for your rescue of Doña Maria from those pigs who attacked her.

"Here you are in peril, in Bejar you are safe, honored. Mexico will be generous with brave gentlemen who serve the tricolor. Lands, bounty, honor, love of women, position! You wish land? *Pouf!* A grant of a thousand, ten thousand, acres is nothing! You understand, I speak freely; your interests and those of Mexico are the same. I'll take you to General Cos, where we may speak again of these silver mines you've given us."

Now the pock-faced Pablo made hasty entrance. "All clear, my captain! The inn is like a beehive with stings out, but the streets are quiet. I cannot answer for the recruits. They have not all come to the boat. Some have come and then gone away to get more liquor—"

"No matter." Don Rodrigo rose. "We bring Mexico what is more important than men—money! The richest silver mines in the world! Your pardon, *amigo;* I must get my things together. Conchita, dress quickly!"

He caught up belt and pistols, began to ram papers into a portfolio. The girl slipped quietly out of the room.

Kenly sat there fingering the knife he had drawn from beneath his hat. No doubt one of those bowie-knives of which he had heard, invented by Rezin Bowie, brother of the man he had struck down. Heavy, razor-edged, the point tipped upward in a curve, of great length. The haft was crudely inlaid with massive silver. Altogether, a most distinctive knife, one in a thousand. Jim Bowie's knife! He shivered again at thought of those blue, magnetic eyes, all astare in death.

Well he knew how to discount the honeyed words of Don Rodrigo. Yet, though he could shed them, they held enough truth to burn deeply into him. He had little or no choice in the matter. And why not? As he knew, the Mexican army, Mexico itself, was the happy hunting ground of American backwoodsmen, soldiers, gentlemen. His fingers closed on the inlaid haft of the knife.

"You will come, Hugo *mio?*" The girl, now more darkly clad, a cloak bound around her figure, had reappeared and was coming to his side, her hand upon his arm like a caress. She was very close to him; he could feel the glow of her, the warm friendliness. He doubted it, he misliked her overt appeal, yet she was not to be denied.

"Don Hugo!" The elegant Rodrigo was fastening a long cloak about his throat, and spoke brusquely, with military authority. "Do you come with us?"

"Aye," said Kenly. He had found himself now, had come to a decision. It was his one chance, his only hope. Fortune drew him, bright eyes, the future that lay over the horizon. A laugh came to his lips, and his brown eyes lit up. "Aye, cap'n! I'm with you, right enough."

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"Good!" Don Rodrigo clapped him heartily on the shoulder. "Matilde?"

"Ready and waiting, my captain," said Pablo. "I'll answer for her valise."

"Forward, then. I'll follow. *Señor*, will you bring Doña Maria? The rearguard to you, the post of honor!"

CHAPTER III.

MATT DEVORE.

KENLY felt the girl's hand on his arm, hugged it against his breast, met her smile with a quick, eager laugh. The repressed vitality of him leaped forth, the energy in his brown, aquiline visage. Well or ill, he was for Texas now, sure enough!

A rear hall led them through the building. Dim lights, but the hand and tongue of the girl guided Kenly. Now down a stair or two, a rear balcony opened before them, and stairs descending into the open of a rear court. Thence, by an iron gate, unlighted, into the pent darkness of a thickly misted lane. The foggy mist was as wet as a drizzle.

The lane cut through into a street. A bracketed light, pale as a phantom, marked the exit. The girl was light but firm upon the American's arm; she was panting a little, more with eagerness and excitement than with effort. Kenly divined the quick, passionate spirit of her; at the moment it thrilled him, though at the back of his head he was not so sure about this tiger-girl.

So they made exit into the street. Pablo and Matilde were well in the lead. Don Rodrigo had fallen back, just ahead of Kenly and the girl. Scarcely did they set foot on the banquette when a voice leaped out.

"Stand! Halt, thar!"

The challenge was swift and sharp as a knife-thrust. There were three men with a lantern, materializing from a sunken doorway, blocking the path, pressing in, peering by the light of their lantern. The exultant cry of wolves at the kill pealed up.

"It's the Spanish girl! And the man, by the 'Tarnal—the very man!"

"Over goes their apple cart—take 'em, boys—"

Even in the rush of bodies and grappling hands, the scene changed, plunged into obscurity. With flutter of cloak and shrewd, agile kick, Don Rodrigo shivered the lantern; his clubbed pistol rose and fell. Kenly was clutched. By riverman's trick his boot heel impacted on a knee of the man who grappled him. The fellow lurched half about and pitched down, floundering in the slime.

A cry from Doña Maria, a savage, exultant cry. A wild oath, a scream; her knife had driven home. Two more figures had loomed out of the fog, hurling themselves into the fight. Too late, for them. Kenly smashed into one, thudded in with fists and boots, sent the man gasping and staggering away. Don Rodrigo flung himself upon the other, long clubbed pistol at work. He could fight, this Spaniard.

"To the boat, Conchita—all of you!" lifted his voice. "I follow. Quickly!"

"With me, Don Hugo!" and she was at Kenly's side, grasping his arm, knife in her hand glimmering dully under the bracketed street light.

They ran, dodging among curses and scrambling forms, shouts lifting to them from farther along the street. The fog had thinned out spottily here. They scurried from cover to cover, not knowing what might be in the ambush or the open ahead. The girl was

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nimble. She ran lightly, swiftly, needing Kenly's arm less than he had need of her guidance.

Pablo and Matilde fell to their rear, thudding and pattering along. And further in the rear lifted the hard, savage American shouts, dully echoing. Other shouts made reply ahead. The alarm had spread. With quick swerve, the girl shunted the chase into another lane, and here the crooked trail was one of darkness, obscurity. She must have the senses of a cat, thought Kenly.

Now she slackened pace. There were twists and corners, sudden turnings, wild bawdy voices bursting from tavern and inn where lights tokened cross streets. But the revelers were snug under roof, and the lights shone dimly; the fog, down here along the river, was thick again and dense. These, Kenly could guess, were not the precincts of the Hotel Beausejour.

Yet the smells of the wharves and the river-miasma hung in the air. Suddenly they broke out upon the levee street, merging with the fog and the night; the dank breath of the river, flowing darkly below them and lapping the pilings of the plank landings, was chill to the face. The girl guided surely, mounting to the levee and sensing all obstruction.

The tethered crafts lay ghostly and silent.

Her figure halted at a gang-plank, signaled by a dim light at the inboard end.

"Your hand, Don Hugo! We are here." Then her voice pierced ahead, urgent yet guarded. "*Alerta! Alerta!* Santa Anna!"

Dim ghostly forms stirred upon the boat, already warned by Pablo. Kenly piloted her down the incline of the narrow bridge and they halted, panting. She was speaking rapidly to the dim figures around, giving orders. After a moment, Pablo and the old dame hove into sight, scrambling along with curses and wheezy breaths. Then the clatter of boot heels on wood, and Captain Estremadura bore in and briskly drove at them with his voice. Finding all here, he snapped orders.

"In with the plank! Cast loose a little and float free—quickly, there. What a cursed fog! But it welcomes us, it enfolds us."

The boat swung to slacked hawsers, lines were hauled in, vague curses and oaths slobbered down along the bulwarks as men worked. A small schooner, as Kenly now became aware. He laughed softly, as he could still hear the bayings of pursuit, muffled by distance, sounding at random. Let them hunt him now! No returning for him; the way back was closed by destiny. Mexico it had to be, whether or no.

Ghostly, silent, the wharves and levee melted away, floated into obscurity and mist. Lights flickered and grew. At the girl's voice Kenly descended a companionway and welcome radiance beckoned him on into the cabin.

Damp and musty here. A large lamp swung in gimbals over the center table. Berths on either side, garments hung up, racks at one end, divided by the door. At the other, oddly enough, was a brick-rimmed hearth with a grated brazier. A fireplace on a ship —Kenly laughed at this. A dark, bronzed man with gold rings in his ears was kneeling before this brazier, rousing it to a glow with working bellows, so that fierce little flames began to surge up among the chunks of black coal, and whiffs of sulphurous charcoal rose pungent on the cabin.

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The girl swung a chair from the table toward the hearth, and took seat, huddling in her cloak and extending her feet to the blaze. Now, in the light, the silk lining of her dark cloak showed a smear of blood, but she heeded it not. The yellow flames were gaining. The dark man stood up and rested his bellows.

"Float with the tide," said Don Rodrigo. "As soon as we have a breeze, lift sail. Watch with sweeps."

"Mad navigation for river nights," spoke out Kenly, frowning. "That's my business. I tell you—"

THE other swept him a keen look. "Needs must when the devil drives, *señor*. Would you stay tied up to the bank, then?"

Kenly nodded comprehension. The dark man spoke, smilingly, urbane.

"There is little danger, *señores*. Already we can see stars; the fog is lifting out here on the water."

"Have men come?" asked Don Rodrigo.

"Three, *señor*. Others came and went again, for liquor or whatnot. Three remained. They are below, in the extra cabins."

"Very well. There is nothing more. Take charge above."

The man went out, closing the door behind him. Don Rodrigo threw off his cloak and hat and stood with his back to the fire, hands hooked in his pistol-belt. His gaze dwelt upon Kenly. A new authority was in his bearing, a curt crispness in his tone.

"I have decided, *amigo*, that once in Bejar it will be best for you to enlist; as an officer, of course. The Mexican uniform will protect you from the past. There we may find Americans, friends and relatives of our Santiago Bowie; and, you know, word flies like the arrow. Besides, he has many friends in Bejar of Mexican blood. It is now a feud, you comprehend; a life for a life."

"I'm not worried over that," and Kenly smiled grimly.

"But I am," said Don Rodrigo. "What I propose is merely for your own interest. I shall report of you to General Cos, and at first opportunity—well, you have already done Mexico a service. There is nothing you may not expect. Meantime, you will receive a dollar and a quarter per diem; Mexico is generous with her soldiers. As an officer, you may receive more. As for tonight, and the few nights to come," and Don Rodrigo spread his hands helplessly, "you see that these quarters are rather limited. What to do? We must make the best of things. Pablo will show you where you may sleep in all comfort, the best we can arrange. Good night, *señor*."

Doña Maria had tossed away her cloak now, holding her hands out to the brazier. Her hair gleamed with the warm gold of promise, and her flashing smile.

"Until tomorrow, *señor;* go with God!" she said.

There was but one reply to these finalities. Kenly left her to the snug cabin and to her cousin Captain Rodrigo Estremadura. He left her, not without an ugly twist to his thoughts, a quick hot glance at the good captain; but Don Rodrigo was musingly twirling his black mustache, black eyes adrift.

Kenly found the deck listless, lit by lanterns, men at work here and there in slovenly fashion. The fog showed signs of breaking, and a breeze was stirring it into slow whirls. Kenly walked forward, and near a lantern a figure turned to welcome him. A bluff,

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slatternly fellow, hat pulled down over whiskered face.

"One of us, mister? Viva Santy Anny and hooray for good pickin's!" came the thick, hoarse voice. "I seen you come aboard with that purty baggage. Me, I was a step ahead of you. A fetching dodge, wan't it? A word in a feller's ear, a little tour up the hall to a tidy room, a *señorita* all eyes and smiles to make a man forget his gal! Plenty more like her for the having in Mexico, says she, taking 'em light or dark. Cripes! If it hadn't been for that rumpus—but what's your handle, mister?"

"Kenly's the name."

"I'm Matt Devore. Glad to get acquainted, comrade. Sojer, ain't you? If it hadn't been for that rumpus, the gal would ha' bagged a full company. Hey, did ye know that somebody done for Jim Bowie? Yes, sir." Devore peered more closely at Kenly's profile, his breath sodden with liquor fumes. "By the token, I'm damned if you ain't the feller yourself! You—"

The sharp exclamation broke from him, broke off sharp. Awe was in his voice, incredulity, accusation.

"Be damned to you then, and sheer off," said Kenly. "You're drunk. Take yourself off or I'll handle you, my friend."

"Aye?"

Devore laughed an ugly laugh, and planted defiant legs. "I'm not so swizzled, mister; damn me, will you? Happens — wan't born in the woods to be scared by no owl. Not me. It's all right, now. I see you setting in the Beausejour, and you wasn't there when next I looked in. The place was in a gabble and the search on for somebody special. I cut stick for the levee, and next I see, you're leading the *señorita* down the plank.

"Ho, you're the feller, all right, I know your mug! But it's hoss and hoss, comrade. You're for t'other side the fence and you've got good reason, including the gal no doubt. So am I. Now look'ee, comrade! Done for Jim Bowie, and your name's up from Tennessee to Nachitoches, ain't it? Well, me the same. I've quit the bloody army, and it's me to drill dragoons. Sergeant major, and a dollar and a quarter a day or more, and stripes down the legs instead of down the back."

THE man's assumption of enforced friendliness, of criminal association, angered Kenly. The fog was into him again, the musty night; the thing most of all burning in his mind was thought of the cabin below. Cousins, indeed!

"I don't care who the devil you are or what you've been," he snapped. "Make yourself scarce or you'll be hanging on a sawyer you won't like."

"Riverman, huh?" Devore sneered, and spat thickly over the rail. "Been in the pilot house, huh? Don't you try to come the officer over Matt Devore; it's no go. You ain't in the cabin now, nor me either, and we're all in the same boat. We'll be sojering for Santy Anny, and ye needn't take no brag about doing for Jim Bowie, neither. You're a better man than him, and there's better'n you."

Kenly turned to the rail, getting a grip on himself, and held silence.

"It happens I'm in a snarl. If I get in another, or Texas gets the gouge holt on Santy Anny," growled on the man, "and if a swap of sides looks convenient for one or t'other of us, or both, you play fair! Understand? You play fair and keep mum, and the same goes for me. Happen we go over

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to the Texans, you may get the stripes and the drumhead for me, but it'll be the rope or a slit gizzard for you. Them Bowie boys are screamers, and they ain't the only fellers to use a knife, neither. Mind me."

With this, Devore swaggered away and was swallowed up. Kenly leaned over the rail, a little sick at heart over the whole thing. Then he was aware of another figure, of a friendly voice. The second time that this same voice had reached into his sick soul.

"It is Pablo, *señor,* Pablo Saccaplata, and I have prepared a bed for the *señor,* on the ropes and canvas down the other hatch. The *señor* will be more comfortable than among those men forward; they are not of his kind. Ah, *señor,*" and for an instant Pablo hesitated, then plunged on. "I am an honest man. They would have left me; I heard the words but my legs would not work. You saved my life, and my life is yours, *señor.* You will pardon, but—"

Again the man hesitated. Kenly had swung around.

"Well, what is it? Go ahead; I'll repeat nothing. Something you want to tell me?"

"But yes." Pablo dropped his voice. "It is Doña Maria, *señor.* In Bejar you will find her no doña, no fine lady, but known as Conchita la Blonda. She is good to look upon, *señor,* as far as the eye may see; but in Bejar the *señor* may learn much—"

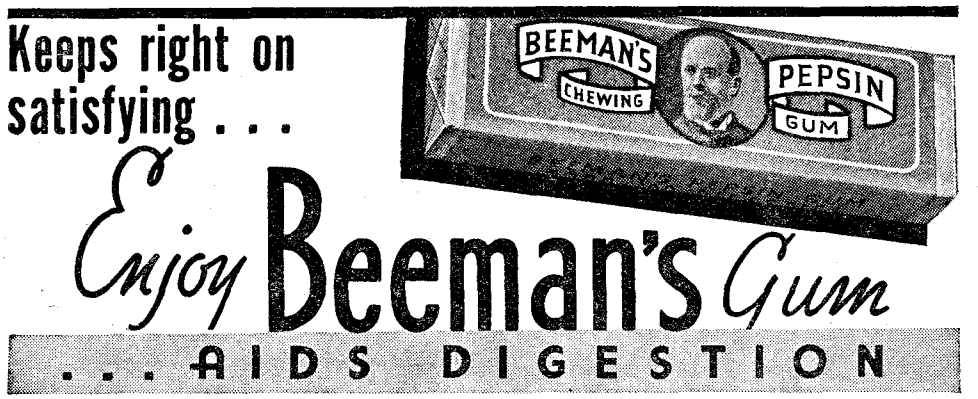
Pablo hesitated again. Kenly smiled grimly.

"Go ahead, *hombre.* I'm getting in debt to you, if I mistake not. Go on."

"*Diablo!* Well, Don Rodrigo may do what he has doubtless promised to do, but one does not expect meat from the wolf. The *señor* is going to be enlisted? Better so. I, too, am of the ranks of Mexico, a soldier. We shall be fellow soldiers, perhaps. I will tell my mother and step-sister about you, *señor.* She is a good girl, *señor,* that step-sister of mine, and she has all the brains that I, Pablo Saccaplata, lack so sadly. Now, if the *señor* wishes to go to bed, I will lead him. The *señor* is not angry?"

Kenly, for answer, put his arm about the wide shoulders, his fingers pressed the serape; he felt a quick, unaccustomed burst of affection for this fellow of honesty and blunt words. Somehow he sensed true friendship here, a rare thing, unwonted loyalty in the pocked visage.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK



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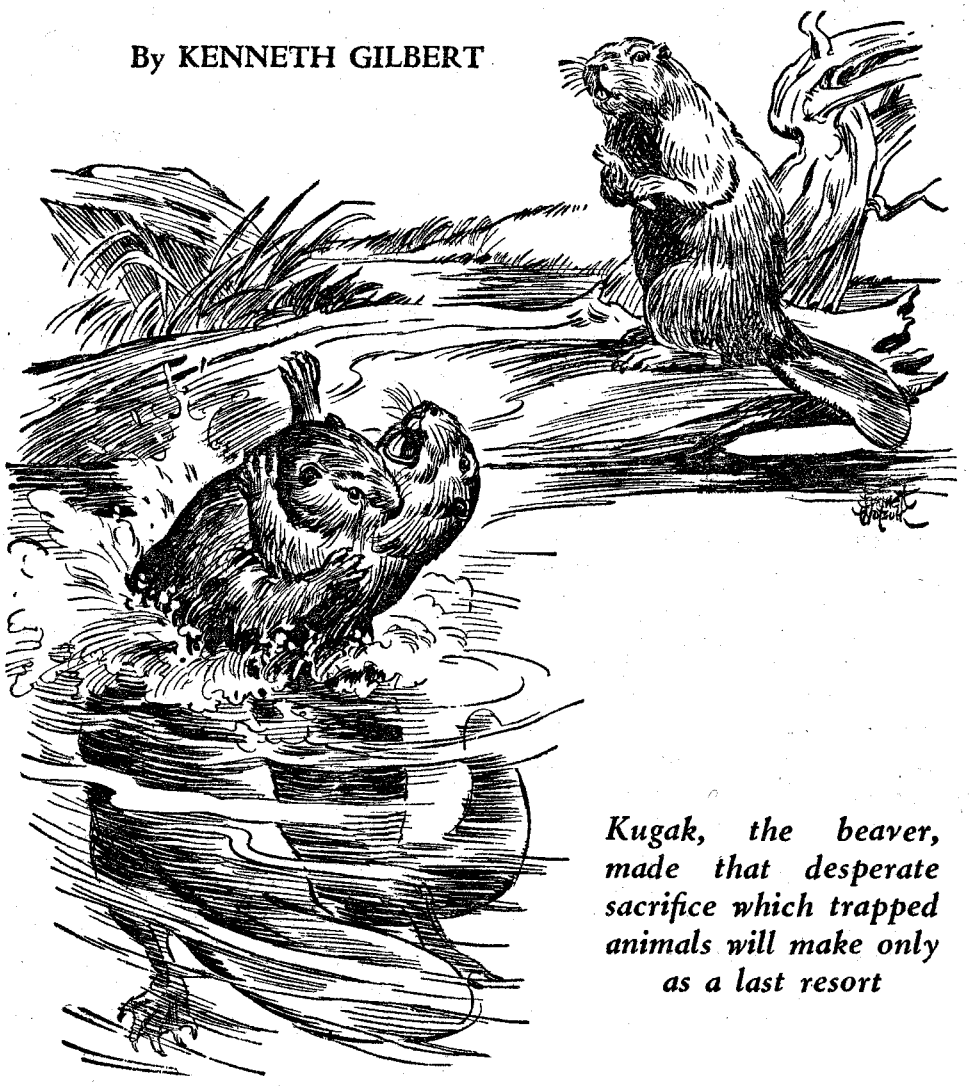
Beaver Moon

By KENNETH GILBERT



Kugak, the beaver, made that desperate sacrifice which trapped animals will make only as a last resort

BELOW the falls, the Skygak swirled in a deep, dark pool, then ran like liquefied glass to a small cascade a hundred yards downstream. There were no signs of life in the pool; no trout leaped there; only the swift, silent flow of the river as though it paused for breath ere it took another wild dive off a rocky shelf. Shores of the stream were still banked with snow, and the encroaching forest stood starkly motionless, the spired spruces outlined against a sky flaming with the sunset of early spring.

Yet now some darker thing moved in the shadowy depths of the pool, and the surface was broken abruptly. A rounded, whiskered face with jet-black, beady eyes lifted from the water; then was visible a short and

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thick-furred body with a broad, naked tail. Webbed feet stroked rapidly as Kugak, who came from the big beaver-colony far down the Skygak, headed for shore. He must leave the security of the stream to risk a portage around the falls.

For, Kugak was an outcast from the big colony downstream, even though he was the son of old Ahmeek, who ruled that pond. Ahmeek, although he weighed close to fifty pounds, was probably aware that he was growing old; and in Kugak, biggest of his sons and who had not accepted the old tyrant's sovereignty, the king jealously saw a contender.

There was an arrogance about the lusty young beaver which bordered on open rebellion, and as Kugak had not yet taken a mate, as had others of his age, he did not fit into the orderly domestic routine of the colony.

Wherever he went, Kugak had met hostility on the part of other males. Beavers mate for life, but chance had apparently decreed that there should be no shy female to share a lodge with Kugak. Thereupon, his father banished him, and Kugak fled upstream.

Somewhere in the world he would find a mate. Together they would start a dam, attract other beavers, and found a new colony, over which Kugak would rule. Therefore, he set out hopefully on his great quest.

To succeed, however, he must pass through ordeals which would have disheartened one who was not the son of a king. For, there were numberless enemies on the lookout at this time of year for beavers traveling alone, cruel Apaches of the wilderness who haunted the watercourses and watched the portages he must make and the shallows he must cross.

Indeed, it seemed that the predatory clan had been warned of his coming, for every mile of his progress was fraught with grave danger. He was out of his element when on land, and away from the sanctuary of the water.

And yet death itself was the only thing that would turn him back on this road of high adventure, for instinct told him that he had discovered *The Sign*—the tiniest drop of castoreum left on a flat rock, but a discovery which set his pulse to pounding madly.

The yellow disk of the Beaver Moon, just lifted above a gunsight notch of the peaks, seemed softly benignant. At any moment, around any bend of the stream he should find his intended mate, preening the long guard-hairs of her silken fur while she waited for him.

The forest gods must have smiled at his impetuous haste; for the forest gods knew what Kugak did not, that the soul-inspiring scent had been placed there by the trapper, Jed Tupper, who always carried a little phial of musk when he set out to poach beaver in the spring. There was nothing poetical about Jed Tupper, and he did not see himself in the light of a betrayer of noble romance.

Kugak lifted his strong body from the chill stream and paused there at the edge of the snow, listening and testing the air. But the wind was wrong and he scented no danger, while the diapason of the falls drowned out all other sound.

Had he been older and less imprudently love-sick, the sixth sense of the wild kindred should have warned him, but an ardor that was like fever drove him on. Awkwardly, he waddled up the steep bank to gain the stream above the falls. He was working along the edge of a high bank, seeking a place where he could return to the river again, when the thing happened.

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OF a sudden, he saw, less than ten feet from him, the personification of death itself. An old lynx, savage-tempered at best, and doubly so now because he was hungry, had been padding silently along the bank when his nostrils caught the musky smell of beaver. Instantly he sank into the snow, motionless except for a nervous twitching of his absurdly short tail, indistinguishable from any gray log from which the snow had melted. Even his eyes, from which the moon struck opalescent flame, were narrowed so that their glare might not betray him. He waited briefly until Kugak, dragging his paddle-shaped tail in the snow, came within easy striking distance.

But the makers of destiny were with Kugak at that moment, and the beaver saw the lynx even as the latter gathered its muscles for the leap. As the big cat, fluffy feet outspread, launched itself in an arrowy spring, Kugak likewise moved quickly. He flung himself blindly for the stream fifteen feet below.

Yet he did not go scathless. The curved claws of one broad pad sank into the vanishing beaver's tail. Kugak's momentum tore him free, but the lynx was caught off-balance. Over the crumbling bank the killer went, striking with a loud splash almost atop the fleeing beaver.

Before the bewildered cat could recover it was seized in the strong grip of the current. Swim madly though it did, it could not escape that insistent drag which pulled it toward the falls. With a yowl of fear it went over the lip, struck half-drowned in the pool below, yet still had enough tenacious hold on life to stroke weakly to shore. Gaining the bank, it squalled explosively in disappointed rage, and melted into the gloomy woods.

Meanwhile, Kugak was swimming underwater upstream as though his life depended upon it. Terror gave him speed; nor did he pause, save for an occasional whiff of air, until the vibrations in the water told him that another waterfall was just ahead. He rose cautiously, and looked about.

What he saw was a series of rapids, the water fairly boiling as it hurried over hidden rocks. It meant a long portage, and Kugak lay for a time in the backwash below the last cataract, paddling slowly while he considered it. Meanwhile, his keen eyes searched the bank, but saw nothing to cause alarm.

Nevertheless, recollection of his narrow escape from the lynx was still strong within him. Suddenly his nose caught a scent which was electrifying. The mate he sought had been there! She might still be about.

Gone was his fear, as he swung toward shore in his eagerness to find her. The drive of his powerful hind feet sent him lurching half out on shore, directly toward the rock whence came the delectable fragrance.

As his body touched gravel, there was a vicious click underwater, and in panic he wheeled and dived into the stream. But he left behind him a handful of fur in the stout jaws of Jed Tupper's trap which, by veriest chance, had missed catching him by a foot.

FOR a long time he remained under until assured that nothing was pursuing. The forest gods were warning him as best they could that he should not go on, but Kugak, of course, had no knowledge of omens. Twice they had spared him now, besetting him with dangerous obstacles.

But there was an unconquerable urge in him that would not be denied; a persistent courage which must arouse

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admiration even in the forces of adversity. The human counterpart of Kugak's mood has written the most glorious pages of history, built cities or wrenched kingdoms from rightful possessors, for no other purpose than the lure of high adventure which drew him now.

Kugak went on, and would continue to go on no matter what bars fate threw across his path. He came out of the water once more, and climbed the bank which would take him around the impassable rapids.

Higher in the heavens swam the Beaver Moon, and its light seemed soft and kindly, although in these altitudes the snow was crusty with the night chill. From afar came the weird moaning of wolves, but Kugak did not concern himself with any danger which was not immediate.

Once on the portage, he paused to test the wind, to make certain that no enemy was stalking him. From behind a log he raised his head carefully, his nose twitching. As he did so the air was suddenly filled with a vague whispering, and something struck him a resounding blow.

He wheeled to look upward, his strong cutting incisors bared, and saw the ghostly shape of a great horned owl beating off hastily on hushed pinions. The owl's talons had ripped Kugak's scalp, but now the winged night-hunter was more startled than he was, having discovered that the prey was no mink or marten.

Kugak shook his head as the warm blood ran in his eyes. There was still time to turn back, but he had no thought of it. Yet he longed for the familiar safety of the water, the sanctuary of a deep and calm pond.

But the realization was still in the future, seemingly farther away than ever. He managed to reach a point almost at the head of the portage before fate struck at him again.

Still shaking his head, and slightly dazed from the fearful blow that the owl had struck, his nostrils were abruptly assailed with a scent which sent a shiver of terror through him. It was an instinctive dread, born of many generations of beavers who fear the wolverene as their greatest enemy among the wilderness folk.

At the rank smell, Kugak acted impulsively. Without pausing long enough to fix the location of the killer, he launched himself from the top of the bank into the stream. As he did so there was a snarling rush, and a heavy paw smote the spot where Kugak had been on the bank a hundredth of a second before. But the frightened beaver struck the foaming water, and his webbed feet churned mightily to carry him into the deep pool above the rapids.

Not until his lungs were ready to burst did he come up for air.

But he was safe now, while the wolverene, scanning the surface of the stream without seeing anything further of the intended prey, turned away in disappointment.

Stretches of smooth water were longer now, and Kugak went on steadily. But in his mind was forming grave doubt. No longer did he scent what seemed to him to be the trail of the female beaver.

He had the uncertainty that she might have turned off from the stream to seek another watercourse beyond a ridge. Yet it did not seem possible that she would have risked a long overland journey. Nevertheless, her trail had vanished. Jed Tupper and his phial of musk had not traveled this far into the heights.

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DISAPPOINTMENT added a touch of savagery to the madness that was in Kugak's veins. Once he rounded a bend to discover a pair of otter sportively sliding down a slippery clay bank into the water. Between otter and beaver there has been feud from the beginning. It would have showed commendable prudence on Kugak's part if he had taken to the woods to avoid meeting the otter pair.

But he did no such thing. He lifted his head from the water directly in front of their slide and chirred defiance at them. As they bared fangs and retorted in kind, Kugak accepted the challenge and launched himself at the one near him, the male. With a flip of his spadelike tail the otter dived, and a second later his mate joined him. Nor did Kugak see anything further of them.

This bloodless victory made him feel better, but he was still torn with indecision, for he could find no trace of the female beaver. Along the edge of the stream he searched, but there was no sign.

And yet he had not given up hope, for that is not the way of youth. He was wounded, and had not slept since the day he was driven out of his father's colony.

And yet the fire in him was not quenched; so far he had met every test which chance had contrived for him. Purpose still stretched ahead of him like a beaten road, and the Beaver Moon seemed placed in the sky to light his way.

Still he went on, but without success. Once a gray wolf came out at the shore, and stared at him hungrily, but Kugak dived instantly, and when he reappeared the wolf was gone. On and on through the night Kugak held his way; and it was when the moon was nearly ready to vanish behind the serrated peaks which marked the skyline that he faced his greatest ordeal.

But it was not without its element of pleased surprise; for as he swung around a turn and came into view of a meadow where the stream ran sluggishly, its banks lined with thickly-growing poplars and other staples of beaverfare, that the wind whispered to him a message which sent the flames of his desire mounting higher than ever.

False though that first scent might have been, this one was genuine. A moment later and he saw her, seated on a half-sunken log, nibbling diffidently on a bulb which she had dug from the bottom of a small bayou.

To his eyes she seemed the most beautiful creature on earth. She was sleek, and her fur had the matchless sheen which fur has only when it is prime, as in spring. Kugak did not know that she had come from another stream whose headwaters were very close to the source of the Skygak; nor did he care, for that matter. All he cared about was that he had found her.

He sent her greeting—a gurgling, strangling sound which carries far across water—then added a coaxing note which was a noise made by the breath sucked inward across tightly-drawn lips. At the same time he speeded up his stroke, steering directly toward her, for there was no restraining his eagerness.

But she paid him no heed. Indeed, she had seen him as he entered the mouth of the mud-bottomed slough, but she had not as much as lifted her head. To all appearances she was utterly indifferent to his existence, maintaining an air of coy innocence. Yet Kugak was undeceived, for in the fact that she made no attempt to escape from him he read invitation.

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Yet there was a subtler, sinister meaning in her attitude which eluded him; nor did the significance of it dawn on him until he was within ten feet of her. At that moment he discovered that she was not alone.

JUST on the other side of the log where she sat was a male beaver, older and bigger than Kugak. Moreover, he was in a truculent mood, and at sight of this newcomer his anger flared.

Long had he pursued this mate. Perhaps in his mind there was the same thought which actuated Kugak—that here in this meadow was the ideal spot for founding another colony. Not yet was the big male beaver ready to encourage handsome young bachelors such as Kugak to settle there, for his new-found mate was by no means won.

Indeed, she was displaying every characteristic of a coquette; so her first suitor was in a highly jealous and savage frame of mind. At sight of Kugak he shot forward like a dark thunderbolt, dived, and struck from beneath.

The surprise of the attack caught Kugak at a disadvantage. Had he known that the female was being courted, particularly by a suitor of this size and vindictiveness, it is possible that he would have veered off and went on his way, philosophically accepting his disappointment. But the other gave him no opportunity for such a decision; and, oddly enough, Kugak seemed glad of it.

For, as the foe came under, striking for Kugak's throat, the young beaver did an astonishing loop, and his teeth chopped into the enemy's flank.

The wound infuriated the other, and he spun about and came at Kugak with a terrifying squall. But this time Kugak dived, and then the battle was below the surface.

Bubbles rose, and the water became cloudy. Now and then there appeared a fragment of water-plant, torn from its roots in that sanguine struggle at the bottom. There were threadlike traces of blood, for neither adversary asked quarter or expected it.

Sometimes, too, there were swirls of water as the reckless gladiators carried the fight upward; regularly there came quick, gasping intakes of breath as buttony noses showed for a second. But what was actually taking place down there the female beaver could not see.

Nor, apparently, did she care. With a manner almost fastidious, she kept munching on the water-bulb. This finished, she began preening herself with meticulous care. Carefully she smoothed down her glossy pelt with an air of sheer vanity. She slicked back her whiskers, scratched herself delicately behind one ear, and appeared thoughtful.

But she appeared to be in no haste about leaving, any more than ladies of the joust would have quitted their seats while armored knights battled gallantly over them on the field of honor. She seemed only mildly interested whenever the water broke and her fighting swains showed for an instant.

Yet beneath the surface, Kugak was aware that he was confronted with a deadly trial by arms that was going against him. The stranger was too big and strong, and was savagely determined. There could be no truce between them; nor did either ask it, or attempt to get away.

The rushing charges of the big male were rapidly winding Kugak, already battered and suffering from wounds, and weary from the long trip upstream.

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No matter how Kugak turned and feinted, or returned slash for slash, the other had the weight of the fight with him. Soon there came realization that death was not far off for the young scion of old Ahmeek.

BUT he was not lacking in courage, for he had in him the blood of that same overlord who had long ruled a whole colony of beavers, and had transmitted his natural aggressiveness to his offspring. Kugak was all but half-dead, but there was no thought of giving up; and, in desperation, he risked all in one final effort.

Head-on the two beavers came at each other, but Kugak dived, reversed himself with lightning-like quickness. Then, as the other's body lay over him darkly, his chisel-teeth sank into the enemy's throat—and locked. At the same time the foeman gripped Kugak's left forefoot.

There they clung, bulldog-fashion, neither willing to let go. Indians have frequently found beavers drowned thus, in deadly stalemate. Slowly they began to sink toward the muddy bottom, their tortured lungs crying for air.

Nor did the stranger release his grip as life went out of him and his body relaxed. Panic seized Kugak, for the set of those strong jaws which held his foot was rigid. Within a few seconds he would be dead himself. He freed his hold, tried to tear his foot loose, but it was as fast as though in the jaws of one of Jed Tupper's traps.

And, swim as he would, he was incapable of dragging that heavy body upward. He gasped, and a string of bubbles like threaded pearls rose to the surface. Frantically, then, he steeled himself for the sacrifice which every trapped wild thing understands but will make only as a last resort.

Still seated on the log, the female beaver stared doubtfully into the calm water before her. It may have occurred to her that the water had grown ominously quiet. It was still so opaque with silt that she could not see the bottom, but no longer was it roiling as the rivals struggled in the depths.

The lady of the log blinked as though in loneliness, for the silvered path of the dying Beaver Moon lay across the silent bayou, and as the moon waned so waned romance.

But the surface was broken abruptly, and there was a whistling intake of breath. Kugak lay there gasping like a landed fish. He gulped and gulped as though his lungs could not get enough of the air so long denied them. Then, weakly, he swam to the log, his wake darkened with the tint of blood.

Slowly he drew himself out and crouched there beside her, trembling, as strength flowed back to him. She touched noses with him, but whether it was in sympathy or the accolade due a victor there was no way of telling. It was certain, however, that she wasted no regret that one wooer had died for love of her.

Indeed, if anything, she seemed flattered; just as she was flattered that Kugak, through cruel self-amputation to save his own life, would henceforth be minus two toes on his left forefoot. Here was a worthy mate who counted no cost too great in order to win her. The touch of her cold nose was a shy caress.

By and by he responded to her gentle overtures; for this was the one great love he would know, with never a thought of another. The pain of his wounds was miraculously assuaged, soothed by a healing magic.

And perhaps as they sat on the wet log and watched the moon go out like a

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quenched candle they had dreams of a day when this wild mountain-meadow would be a vast beaver pond, bigger than any other for miles around; a friendly water peopled with their children and their children's children; and many a wandering beaver would seek it, content to acknowledge this new-made dynasty of Kugak and his mate.

There would be a dam of such depth and thickness that no flood would destroy it.

And when the bitter stillness of winter lay upon the land, and snow drifted over the snugly-built lodges, there would be food logs in abundance, piled deeply in the center of the pond.

The famine-cry of the kindred who must face the storms that raged without would be unheard by the contented dwellers beneath the ice.

These were the dreams of Kugak and his long-sought mate as the Beaver Moon sank and the east whitened and then flushed red like a rainbow of promise.

THE END

New Uses for X-Rays

BROKEN bones and dentistry are no longer the only practical uses of the X-ray machine. With more or less success it is being used to find fractures in iron castings and welded joints, impurities in coal, and explosives in mail packages. It has discovered narcotics hidden in cigars, pearls in oysters. It is handy for distinguishing real pearls from imitations, as the genuine pearl glows eerily when held in the rays. Genuine diamonds, on the other hand, are quite transparent to X-rays, while fakes show cloudiness on a photographic plate.

By using rays it is possible to find sand mixed with sugar, chalk with flour. Emery wheels are X-rayed for cracks and glass-melting pots for anything that might stain the glass. Wood used in airplanes is X-rayed for resin pockets and worm holes. Plumbers have taken up the machine to find pipes hidden in walls; shoe stores to show customers how well their shoes fit.

Golf balls and chocolates are also radiographed to show their interiors to customers.

—Delos White.

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MEN OF DARING
BY STOOKIE ALLEN
ADVENTURER and SHARKOLOGIST
FIGHTER, EXPLORER AND SOLDIER OF FORTUNE, CAPTAIN JEAN M. ELLRICH HAS BEEN A JACK AT MANY TRADES BUT IT IS IN THE BUSINESS OF SHARK FISHING THAT HE RATES AS A MASTER.
Jean Ellrich
BORN IN ALTONA, GERMANY IN 1902. IN 1907 HIS FATHER SETTLED IN HOBOKEN, N.J., LEAVING JEAN IN GERMANY TO BE EDUCATED. STUDENT DUELLING WHILE STUDYING LAW MARKED THE BOY'S CHEEKS WITH THE COVETED "SCARS OF HONOR". THE WORLD WAR STOPPED HIS STUDIES.
BARELY 17, JEAN SAW NO REAL ACTION UNTIL AFTER THE ARMISTICE. THEN, FIGHTING IN THE RUSSIAN WHITE ARMY AGAINST THE BOLSHEVIKI HE WON 5 CITATIONS. CAPTURED AT LENGTH WITH A SQUAD OF MEN AT RIGA IN 1919, IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT HE AND HIS COMRADES DISARMED ONE OF THE FOUR GUARDS, CLAPPED THE OTHERS INTO A CELLAR AND ESCAPED INTO REVOLUTION-TORN GERMANY.

A TRUE STORY IN PICTURES EVERY WEEK

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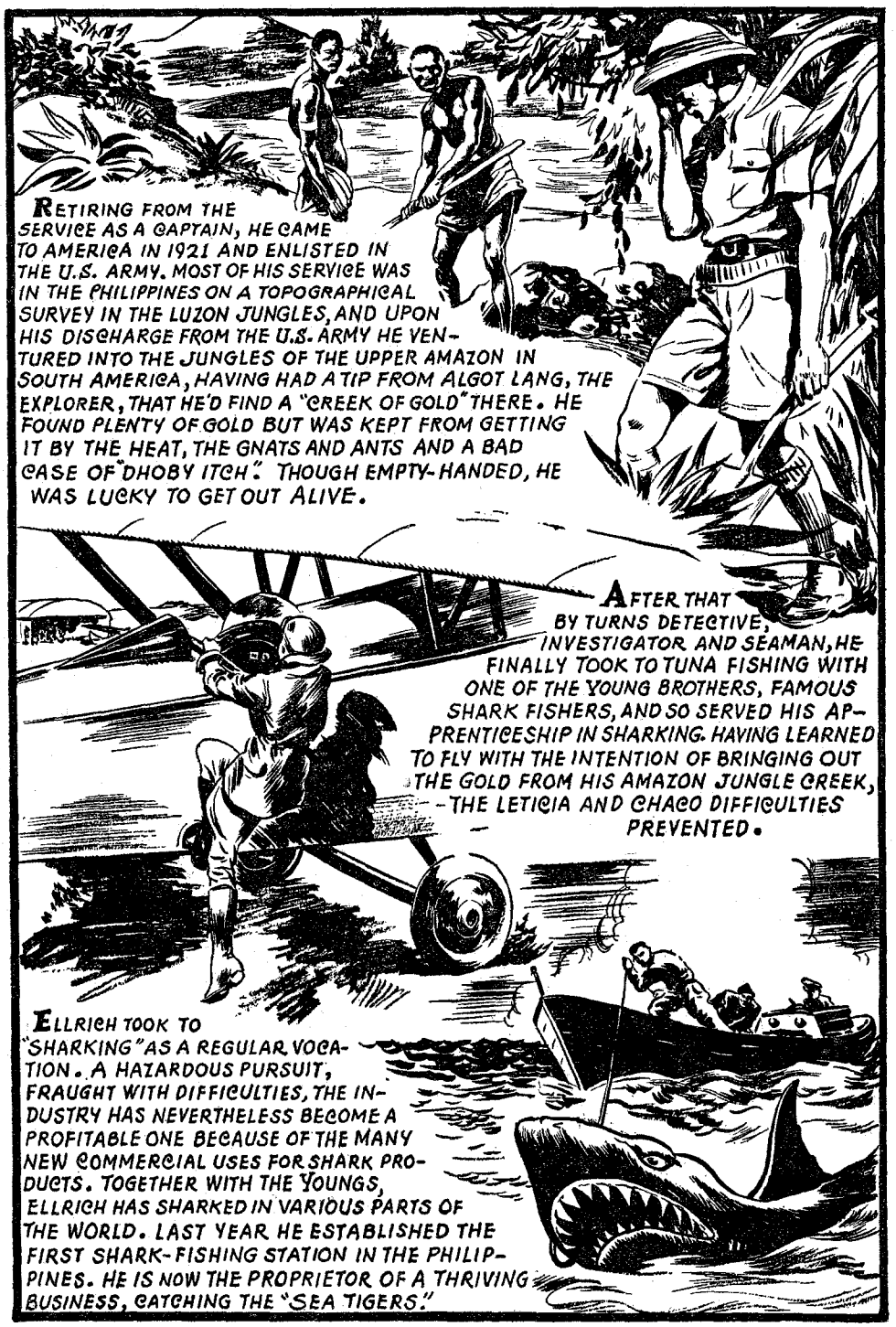
RETIRING FROM THE SERVICE AS A CAPTAIN, HE CAME TO AMERICA IN 1921 AND ENLISTED IN THE U.S. ARMY. MOST OF HIS SERVICE WAS IN THE PHILIPPINES ON A TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY IN THE LUZON JUNGLES, AND UPON HIS DISCHARGE FROM THE U.S. ARMY HE VENTURED INTO THE JUNGLES OF THE UPPER AMAZON IN SOUTH AMERICA, HAVING HAD A TIP FROM ALGOT LANG, THE EXPLORER, THAT HE'D FIND A "CREEK OF GOLD" THERE. HE FOUND PLENTY OF GOLD BUT WAS KEPT FROM GETTING IT BY THE HEAT, THE GNATS AND ANTS AND A BAD CASE OF "DHOBY ITCH". THOUGH EMPTY-HANDED, HE WAS LUCKY TO GET OUT ALIVE.
AFTER THAT BY TURNS DETECTIVE, INVESTIGATOR AND SEAMAN, HE FINALLY TOOK TO TUNA FISHING WITH ONE OF THE YOUNG BROTHERS, FAMOUS SHARK FISHERS, AND SO SERVED HIS APPRENTICESHIP IN SHARKING. HAVING LEARNED TO FLY WITH THE INTENTION OF BRINGING OUT THE GOLD FROM HIS AMAZON JUNGLE CREEK, —THE LETICIA AND CHACO DIFFICULTIES PREVENTED.
ELLRICH TOOK TO "SHARKING" AS A REGULAR VOCATION. A HAZARDOUS PURSUIT, FRAUGHT WITH DIFFICULTIES, THE INDUSTRY HAS NEVERTHELESS BECOME A PROFITABLE ONE BECAUSE OF THE MANY NEW COMMERCIAL USES FOR SHARK PRODUCTS. TOGETHER WITH THE YOUNGS, ELLRICH HAS SHARKED IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD. LAST YEAR HE ESTABLISHED THE FIRST SHARK-FISHING STATION IN THE PHILIPPINES. HE IS NOW THE PROPRIETOR OF A THRIVING BUSINESS, CATCHING THE "SEA TIGERS."

NEXT WEEK: BUFFALO JONES, WIZARD OF THE WILD

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Half-Million Murder

By ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

"You're going with us. Climb in"

Tom Eagle, man-hunting district attorney, reveals a new way to track a killer

LEADING UP TO THIS CONCLUDING INSTALLMENT

WHEN Professor Luther Veede was found murdered in his New Jersey home, bloodhounds traced the killer to the near-by estate of Lakehaven, where five men were staying. Just before he was shot, Veede phoned Major Tom Eagle, Cherokee Indian district attorney, asking for an appointment to discuss a murder involving two prominent people and half a million dollars.

The five men at Lakehaven were Paul Standeven, professional traveler; Aaron Crider, banker and ex-Congressman; Dr. Kimberly Rice; Jim Sherrill and Willis Weatherbee. Mrs. Standeven, Mrs. Crider and Mrs. Rice, also guests at Lakehaven, had gone to New York to attend the theater the evening of the murder. A hurry call brought them back from the hotel where they were spending the night.

Eagle discovered that Alec Veede, son of the murdered man, was missing, and suspected that he might have been drowned in the lake separating Lakehaven and the Veede estate. Eagle also found that whoever had murdered Veede had disposed of a bit of evidence by throwing it in the lake. It was a "Who's Who," which had evi-

This story began in the Argosy for September 28

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dently been stained with blood on a certain page. A search was begun for the book.

CHAPTER XII.

WHO'S WHO?

EAGLE and Pryde stood by the receding rim of the lake. A wide belt of mud now separated them from water. Exposed were the wader's tracks from the point A almost to the point C as sketched by Eagle. A flood was pouring through the outlet pipe, they knew, and Senator Foxheart's lake was already conspicuously shrunken.

"What about getting in touch," Pryde asked, "with the courthouse?"

"Please do. Inquire especially if they've been able to locate Alec Veede."

Pryde moved off toward the nearest telephone, which was at the Veede cottage.

Looking the opposite direction, Major Eagle could make out the porch at Lakehaven. He saw a man and a woman emerge with golf bags. In the distance they were mere dots of color, and even Eagle's keen eyes could not see who they were. He saw, though, that they turned toward the golf course directly beyond the house.

The incident troubled him slightly. It would be so easy for a pair of guilty guests to go ostensibly to play golf—and not come back. Yet he was hardly justified in holding them to a rigid quarantine within doors. And no discreetly clever pair of criminals, he thought, would draw suspicion to themselves by slipping away.

He turned again toward the receding water. The deepest track of last night's wader, at C, was now uncovered. There the man must have stood to throw a bulky clue farther out into the lake. How far could he throw a copy of "Who's Who"?

Not more than twenty yards, Eagle thought. The lake's rim was already about five yards beyond C.

Now he saw a man approaching from the direction of Lakehaven. He was Eric Pitt, the chauffeur, and was wearing work clothes and boots.

"What's the idea of draining the lake?" Pitt asked when he arrived.

Eagle smiled. "To find what's on the bottom," he said.

"The old man'll raise hell." The chauffeur frowned at the receding water.

"You mean Senator Foxheart?"

"Sure. He's got this lake stocked with bass, and you'll lose 'em."

Then Pryde arrived back from Veede's cottage. "Just talked with Coroner DeQuince," he said.

"Has he any news?" Eagle asked.

"He says they can't get any trace of young Veede. So he says why the hell don't we drain the lake and find out if he's drowned."

"Perhaps we should," Eagle conceded.

They could make a definite decision, he thought, after a look at the submerged "Who's Who." That clue would probably implicate either Rice or Crider. If Crider, then surely they would be justified in draining the lake. For it was Aaron Crider who had effectively blocked a suggestion to drain the lake by the ruse of claiming a straw hat.

"Who left the house," Eagle inquired of Pitt, "to play golf?"

"It was Dr. and Mrs. Rice."

THE receding water's edge was more than a dozen yards beyond C. And now, sooner than he had expected, Eagle made out a spot of red.

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Red leather! He saw a bedraggled bump of it in the mud at the water's edge.

Pryde sighted it and yelled, "There she blows, Major!"

"You want it, do you?" Eric Pitt said quickly. "Let me get it. I got boots on."

"Please don't trouble yourself," Eagle said. "Mr. Pryde, will you bring it here?"

Pryde, stepping into the mud, started for the spot of red.

"You can close the pipe now, can't you?" Pitt asked anxiously.

"We'll see."

Pryde was out there at the edge of the water, gouging a leather-bound book from the mud. Half buried and slick with slime, it was small wonder that a seine had slid over it.

"It's 'Who's Who,' all right," Pryde shouted.

"Who's what?" echoed Pitt.

"Who's the murderer." Pryde came dragging back through the mud with the book in hand.

Eagle took the short, fat volume and wiped it on clean grass. Then he used a handkerchief to remove slime from the edges and cover. It was, naturally, water-soaked through. The pages were more or less stuck together. But Eagle observed that a fluid other than water had stained those pages.

The pinkness of blood was there. The more positive stain, he knew, would be on that page which had been open in front of Professor Veede.

The determining of that page was in no way difficult. Eagle, with a knife, carefully slit the book open at the place where the victim's flowing blood had drenched it. This stain had soaked to slight degree to other pages, but here beyond doubt was the bright and original discoloration.

With surprise, Eagle saw that the page did not contain the name of either Rice or Crider. Instead, it bore names which all began with the letter G. From the top of the left-hand page to the bottom of the right were fourteen names. Fourteen brief biographies of men whose achievements had rated inclusion in this book.

Major Eagle did not know any of the fourteen men. Certainly no name here had cropped up in connection with the Lakehaven mystery.

"It looks," Pryde said, "like a blind alley."

"Shall I tip him to close the valve, Major?"

Eagle's brow furrowed. "Perhaps we shouldn't."

Eric Pitt objected sharply. "Senator Foxheart will raise hell. What's the idea, anyway?"

"The idea," Eagle explained, "would be to determine whether Alec Veede was drowned."

"But he wasn't," Pitt said quickly. "I'll guarantee he wasn't."

Eagle's eyes flashed on him. "How do you know?"

Pitt hesitated. He stood biting a lip for a moment, then said, "Well, because I saw him alive this morning."

"Where?"

"In New York."

"Why didn't you say so?"

The chauffeur looked down and dug his boot toe in the sand. "Well, it was because I didn't want to get 'em in Dutch."

"Get whom in Dutch?"

"Mrs. Crider and her boy friend."

"Alec Veede?"

"That's it. Alec was the one that drove up with her in a taxi, at four thirty this morning.'

"In that case," Eagle decided, "we had better close the valve."

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Pryde waved a white rag. The man on the distant dam saw this signal. Immediately he closed the outlet of the lake.

CHAPTER XIII.

GOSS TO GWYNNE.

THE district attorney, after dispatching Pryde on a trip to inquire of a certain taxi driver in New York, walked swiftly toward the house at Lakehaven. He was far from accepting the testimony of Eric Pitt. "*Two* of them are in on it," Professor Veede had said. And now *two* persons had blocked a suggestion to drain the lake.

Aaron Crider by claiming a hat not his own, and Eric Pitt by claiming to have seen Alec Veede alive this morning in New York.

With a soiled "Who's Who" under his arm, Eagle reached the house lawn. He had guessed wrong about finding the name of Rice or Crider on the incriminating page. That disturbed him for a while, and then he considered that a man may figure prominently in a crime without himself being the criminal.

He might be merely an important witness.

A witness! Professor Veede had stated that he expected to assemble definite proof by morning. Where would he get proof? From an important witness, of course. He had mentioned a theft of half a million dollars. In a case like that, the most usable witness for the State would be, not the thief, but the man from whom the money had been stolen.

A man successful enough to have half a million dollars stolen from him would be a well known person. That checked, for Veede had said the case involved persons of prominence.

Therefore the victim of the thievery might well be listed in "Who's Who." And Eagle was aware that "Who's Who" gives the present home address of each person listed. Veede, with "Who's Who" open in front of him, had asked Central for Long Distance. Had he opened "Who's Who" merely to look up an address? Major Eagle was convinced, now, that he had. Veede, desiring to speak with a certain prominent American, had simply used "Who's Who" as a convenient Long Distance telephone directory.

Reaching the house, Eagle went to the phone there and called Nell Hope.

"Is 'Who's Who' at your elbow?" he asked.

"It is, Major."

"Open it, please, to pages 990-991."

"I have it open there."

"You see fourteen brief biographical items. The name at the top of page 990 is Adam Goss. Seymour Gwynne is at the bottom of page 991."

"That is correct, Major."

"Without delay, put in a Long Distance call to each of the fourteen men on those two pages. Remain by the telephone all day if necessary, and as each call responds please inquire as follows:"

"Ready," Nell Hope said.

Eagle knew that her pencil was poised to take down his instructions.

"Name to each caller the guests now at Lakehaven. Ask if he has ever had any important or odd connection with any of them.

"Explain that you are speaking for the district attorney, and at work on a crime solution."

"I understand."

"If the answer is negative, you are sorry you disturbed him. If affirma-

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tive, please transfer the call to me here."

"All right, Major."

EAGLE went forward along the hall. At the portière of the library entrance he noted a slight bulge which indicated that a pistol was still cached in the folds there. Locke, he knew, was still watching at his post. Nevertheless, Eagle felt an urge to examine the cache and make sure the weapon hadn't been disturbed. He desisted only because he heard voices in the library. So he entered the library without touching the drapery. The soiled "Who's Who" was still under his arm.

Voices hushed as he entered. Paul Standeven and Willis Weatherbee were there, Standeven seated, the younger man standing. Eagle saw a dash of gray at Standeven's temples, knew the man was a little older than he had guessed. He turned a hard, sun-baked face toward Eagle and asked, "We're being detained, are we, Mr. Eagle?"

"Not exactly." Eagle smiled. "You may go if you wish, but we shall inform ourselves as to where you go." He sat down with the "Who's Who" on his knees.

"You don't need to worry," Standeven said stiffly, "about me. Mrs. Standeven and I shall stand pat here until this business is settled."

Willis Weatherbee pointed to the soiled red book.

"What's that?" he piped in a thin voice.

"A list of our best people," Eagle said.

Weatherbee blinked at the book, but asked no more questions. Standeven frowned, then took out a pipe and stoked it. He did not seem interested in the book.

But was he interested in a pistol over there in the drapery? Some man in this house was. Surely it had been put there to be available for sudden use.

Eagle put the book under his arm, arose and went out on the porch. There he spoke quietly to Locke.

"Have you been here all the time?"

"Right here, sir."

"Watching sharply?"

"Haven't taken my eyes off it," Locke said.

"Please see that you don't."

Looking across the lawn, Eagle saw Mrs. Standeven at a rose shrub, cutting roses. The business of gathering posies somehow did not seem to fit the character of that tall and angular woman. She was hard and stalwart and long-limbed, a good mate, Eagle thought, for her husband.

When she passed him on her way in with the roses, Amy Standeven gave him only a curt nod. A little later James Sherrill, grinning, came around a corner of the house.

"What happened to the lake, Major?" he asked. "It's shrunk."

"A rain or two will remedy that," Eagle evaded.

"Find any trace of young Veede?"

"Not yet."

"Well, 's 'bout time for lunch. I'll have Hilda put your name in the pot." Sherrill gave Eagle a clap on the shoulder, then sauntered into the house.

A FEW minutes later the Rices returned from playing golf. Zella Rice looked tired and spiritless. She was a matron of about forty, Eagle thought, with fair, flat features and pale eyes.

"Anything new?" Dr. Rice inquired. He puffed a little as he climbed the porch. His broad face perspired freely.

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"Only this." Eagle held up the soiled red book.

"That? Well, what about it?" Rice's expression was blank.

His wife's pale eyes widened. "Why, it looks like a copy of 'Who's Who.'"

They stood waiting for Eagle to explain. When he did not, they entered the house, dragging golf bags with them.

Where, Eagle wondered, were the Criders?

He asked Locke. Locke said he had not seen Mrs. Crider for the past hour, but through the window he had just seen Aaron Crider enter the sun room. Eagle went in and to the sun room. Crider was there. The bald banker was gulping down a rye whisky as Eagle entered.

He whirled with ill temper. "Well, what do *you* want?"

"I want to follow footprints," Eagle answered pleasantly, "to the man who made them."

"I didn't make 'em," Crider snapped.

"Someone made them, and I rather think it wasn't young Weatherbee."

"Why not Weatherbee?"

"He's a featherweight. I think the tracks were made by a heavier man."

Crider bit the end from a cigar. Then he saw the book under Eagle's arm.

"What you got there?"

"A 'Who's Who,' Mr. Crider."

"Where did you get it? Looks like it's been dragged through the mud."

"I got it," Eagle said, "where you lost your straw hat."

Crider's lids lowered. "Well, what do you want with it?"

"I was expecting," Eagle explained, "to pick the murderer's name from it."

"Murderer? In 'Who's Who'? Man, you're crazy! You're wilder 'n a drunken Sioux chief! It's no crime to be in 'Who's Who,' is it?"

Eagle smiled shyly. "I hope not," he said. "Because I happen to be in it myself."

CHAPTER XIV.

ANOTHER FOOTPRINT.

LORETTA CRIDER did not appear at lunch. It was a subdued gathering. Eagle, who joined them there, noted that the restraint now extended even to James Sherrill. Eagle's psychic sense could feel a menace somewhere in this group. Fear and guilt and desperation sat amongst these guests at Lakehaven.

Desperation was proved, he thought, by the gun cached in the portière. Eagle had used it to bait a trap, but the trap had failed to spring. Most likely the guilty man by now had observed Locke's persistent watch on the porch. That being the case, there was no longer any reason to leave the trap baited. At best it was a desperate ruse. So Eagle now decided to take charge of the weapon himself.

Excusing himself from the table, he went to the front hall. There, with no one but Locke to see him, he delved a hand into the fold of the portière.

And brought forth a billiard ball. A flush of dismay mounted to Eagle's high cheekbones. He called Locke. It was plain that Locke had been derelict at his vigil.

"It couldn't be." Locke gaped aghast at the billiard ball.

It was like Eagle not to rebuke him. Instead he put a friendly arm about the constable and said quietly:

"Too bad. And can't be helped now.

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The only thing we can do is search all of them."

"Okay, Major. Leave the frisk to me."

As the others came from the dining room, Eagle asked them to step into the library. When they were assembled there he called the cook, Hilda.

"Has anyone else," he asked, "been in the house since eight this morning?"

"Only my wife," Crider said. "And if you can keep track of *her* you're one up on me."

"What's it about, anyway?" inquired Standeven.

"It's about a pistol," Eagle said, "which someone hid in a fold of this knotted drapery. It was there at eight. It's gone now."

"So that," exclaimed Dr. Rice, "is why you had a man spying through the window all morning!"

"That is why. But the gun is gone. Which of you took it?"

"Easily settled," Rice offered blandly. "Why don't you search us?"

"Rather," Sherrill agreed. "For my part, I insist on being searched."

"There's no help for it, I suppose," Standeven said.

"Hilda, if you like," Amy Standeven said, "may search me."

"Mercy!" protested Zella Rice. "You'd think we're a pack of rogues."

Her husband said: "Mr. Eagle is quite right, my dear. Veede was shot and the tracks lead here. Most assuredly we don't want the murderer roaming freely among us with a pistol. Was the pistol loaded, Mr. Eagle?"

THE women went upstairs to search each other. Locke in turn searched the men. He found no weapon. The same report came from upstairs. It meant, Eagle reasoned, that the pistol had simply been shifted from one unincriminating cache to another.

Most likely it was still where the guilty man could get a hand on it at short notice. The instant any convicting clue developed, he could be expected to make a dash for it and try shooting his way to freedom.

Eagle instructed Locke to take Hilda and make a thorough search of all rooms both above and below stairs. Was there a cellar? There was, with an entrance to it at the rear of the front hall. They must search the cellar, too.

Eagle himself, still with the soiled red book under his arm, went out to look for Loretta Crider. Shortly he found her in a small house at the far edge of the lawn. At a rustic table there she was penning a letter.

He was beside her before she knew it. Eagle saw her snatch up the letter and hide it in the bodice of her dress. Her cheeks flamed. Immediately he guessed that she had slipped away here to write the now concealed letter.

She stood up uneasily. Her voice cracked with a false gayety. "You're Mr. Eagle? I was hoping to meet you."

"Won't you sit down, please, Mrs. Crider?"

She sat down abruptly. Eagle remained standing. Her purse lay by her. It was too tiny to hold a gun, he saw. The woman herself was slim, dressed in a tight-fitting sport suit open deep at the throat. Her slender trimness convinced Eagle that nothing as bulky as a gun could be concealed on her person.

"Why," he asked, "did your husband claim a hat not his own?"

"But it was," she protested. "He lost it while fishing in the lake."

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"You're quite sure he did?"

"Of course."

"When did you last see Alec Veede?"

She was startled.

"Alec Veede? You mean Professor Veede's son? Why, I don't know him at all."

"You weren't out with him last night?"

"Out with him? That's absurd!"

"A witness says you were."

Her head fell and she was crying.

"Come," Eagle promised gently. "Unless it bears on the murder of Professor Veede, I'll say nothing about it to your husband."

"It has nothing to do with it," she sobbed.

"What about the straw hat?"

"Aaron hit him with an oar."

"Hit Alec Veede? And knocked him out of a boat?"

"Not that," she said. "But one evening Alec and I went boat-riding. We'd met at a tea dance in New York. It was nothing, but Aaron is terribly jealous."

EAGLE was willing to concede that he would be.

"You went out on the lake with Alec a few evenings ago? And Mr. Crider found you?"

"He was alongside before we knew it," she admitted. "He made me get into his boat. Then he hit Alec with an oar. It knocked Alec's hat into the water."

"Then what?"

"Aaron told Alec that if he found him with me again, he'd shoot him. He had a pistol. I was afraid he would shoot him then. So I snatched the pistol from him and threw it into the lake.

"Alec was frightened. His head was bleeding, too, where the oar hit him; and he didn't want to tell his father why he was hurt. So he went to New York."

"And four days later, yesterday I mean, you saw him there?"

"I called him up from the hotel merely to ask how he was. But he insisted on seeing me. We didn't mean to stay out late, but—"

"But you had drinks. And one night club led to another. And just now you were writing him a note?"

"I wasn't, honestly," she pleaded. "I don't even know where he is." She did not, however, offer to prove it by showing the note.

"You won't tell Aaron?" she pleaded.

"Not if you've been entirely truthful."

"Oh, I have."

She dried her eyes, then, rubbed rouge on her cheeks, and went out.

Eagle remained in the summer house. Ten to one, he thought, she had told him the truth.

There was even a bare possibility that Loretta Crider and Alec Veede, between theater time and 4.30 A.M., had made a round trip to Lakehaven. But more likely the two conspirators referred to by Professor Veede were a husband and wife. Of the three couples at Lakehaven, the stalwart Standevens struck Eagle as the most boldly competent. They were an adventuring pair. They had traveled far.

Eagle now left the summer house and started to cross the lawn. What caught his eye was a thing which only an Indian might have noticed. Two woodpeckers were scolding near the base of a vine-covered snag.

No dog or cat or human was disturbing the birds. Why were they so angrily chattering?

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Eagle turned aside to find out. He saw each of the birds in turn fly to the snag, cling there for a moment, then fly back to the ground.

Advancing nearer, the district attorney spotted a hole in the snag about five feet above the ground. A woodbine almost obscured the hole. The woodpeckers, Eagle decided, had a nest within it.

They were complaining because of some intrusion there. No one was in sight, so Eagle went directly to the snag. At the base of it he saw a footprint. It was a small, French-heeled footprint—the track of a woman. It had been made since last night's rain.

Eagle reached a hand into the hole. What he drew out was a shopping bundle. It was solid and heavy, wrapped in the paper of the Markles' Department Store of New York. It was the store where the three ladies had shopped yesterday afternoon. Eagle recalled seeing them arrive with a score of packages. Eric Pitt had carried them into the hall, after which Hilda Neillson had helped him distribute them.

A name, Eagle saw, had been pencilled on the wrapping of this bundle. But it had been carefully erased. He took the package to the summer house and there opened it. In it he found twenty-nine thousand dollars in currency. Also there was a box of miscellaneous jewels.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PAGED WITNESS.

EAGLE rewrapped the bundle. When he put it under his arm the trademark of Markles' Department Store was plainly visible on the outside, just as it had been before. Then, with the "Who's Who" tucked under the other arm, Eagle crossed the lawn to the house.

As he entered there he heard the telephone ringing persistently. Going to it, he heard the voice of Nell Hope.

"I broke speed records getting those calls through, Major. Have already heard from nine out of fourteen."

"With any result?"

"The first eight answers," Miss Hope reported, "were negative. The ninth was from Palo Alto, California. The man who talked to me is the private secretary of Stephen B. Grimshaw. Mr. Grimshaw owns a steamship line to the Orient, a lumber empire in Oregon, and in all is one of the wealthiest men on the West Coast."

Such a man would be in "Who's Who," Eagle realized, with his name listed between Goss and Gwynne.

"Mr. Grimshaw's secretary," Nell said, "told me that Mr. Grimshaw had had an intimate connection with one of the names I mentioned. But he said it was the sort of thing I would have to take up with his employer personally. Mr. Grimshaw, he said, was not at home."

"You asked where he was?"

"Of course. He said Mr. Grimshaw has been resting at a hot springs resort near Richmond, Virginia, but is due to return west today or tomorrow. The secretary said I might possibly catch him if I put in a call immediately. He gave me the name of the Virginia hotel. So I put in the call."

"And got the connection?"

"In record time, Major. I have Mr. Grimshaw on the wire now. Shall I transfer the call to you?"

"Please."

Waiting, Eagle opened "Who's Who" to the item about Grimshaw.

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There his eye fell upon the maiden name of the man's divorced wife.

A gruff voice came to him—"Well, this is Grimshaw."

"Mr. Grimshaw, I'm Tom Eagle, a New Jersey district attorney on the track of a murderer. The victim was a Professor Luther Veede. Did you know him?"

"Luther Veede? Certainly. I knew Veede quite well years ago in California. Murdered, you say?"

"Last night. His last act was to ask Central for Long Distance. We think he intended to call you at your Palo Alto residence."

"Sorry to hear about it. But why should he or you be calling me?"

"Did you ever," Eagle inquired, "have half a million dollars stolen from you?"

"No." Emphatically.

"Are you sure?"

"Of course I am. How could I lose half a million without knowing it?"

"Please listen to the facts, Mr. Grimshaw." Quickly Eagle told him what Veede had said in telephoning for an appointment. He explained that the felon's tracks led directly to Lakehaven, and named the Lakehaven guests.

THE last name mentioned drew a sharp response from Grimshaw.

"I married that girl twenty-two years ago," he said. "A year later she divorced me, went East, and married again."

"You know positively that your divorced wife is still living, Mr. Grimshaw."

"I ought to be. I have been paying her twenty-five thousand a year ever since the divorce."

"You've seen her during that time?"

"No, I haven't."

Eagle's mind flashed.

"If she died about twenty years ago, it would answer a question you asked just now, wouldn't it?"

"What question?"

"'How could I lose half a million without knowing it?'"

"I don't quite understand you."

"Twenty times twenty-five thousand, Mr. Grimshaw, would make half a million."

"Great Scott, man! You mean—"

"Upon what," Eagle interrupted, "have you based the assumption that your divorced wife is still living?"

"Upon two facts. First, she sends a receipt each year for the settlement annuity. Second, Emma Benson came into my office only six months ago. Emma, during my married life, was a maid in our house. I remembered her quite well. She said she no longer worked for her old mistress, but had seen her recently and found her in good health."

Eagle said:

"It may be that Emma Benson paid that call and gave that testimony merely to make sure you keep on paying the annuity without question. It may be that Emma Benson here in the East has for many years been posing as your divorced wife to collect the annuity herself. That's a guess so far, but it would tie the threads."

After a silence, Grimshaw answered slowly:

"Perhaps, Mr. Eagle, I'd better have a look at those folks at Lakehaven."

"I hope you will."

"I was on the point of flying back to California," Grimshaw said. "I'm all dressed for it, with my private plane and pilot waiting. How far are you from me?"

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"If you are near Richmond, I should say the airline distance would be about three hundred miles."

"Then I could make it in two and a half hours. Is there a landing field near?"

"A fairway of the Kittatinny golf course reaches almost to the house. In this emergency, and to save time, you could land there."

"Would my pilot have trouble finding it?"

"None at all. He can follow the Delaware River as far as Phillipsburg, then veer northeast. The lake, the golf links and this red-roofed house make good landmarks."

"I shall start this minute."

"Thank you, Mr. Grimshaw."

Eagle picked up the Markles bundle and the "Who's Who." With them he went to the library archway. Tall and erect he stood there, shook the overhanging black hair from his eyes, with his exhibits exposed to all of them.

The entire company was grouped there. Whether they had overheard his conversation on the phone Eagle did not know. But they were, except for the bland and fat Dr. Rice, in a strain of tension.

For once James Sherrill was not grinning. Willis Weatherbee sat pale and stiff on the edge of a chair. Crider stood with his back to the mantel, feet wide apart, staring at the bundle under Eagle's arm. The cigarette was dead between Standeven's hard lips. Rice, though, sat overflowing an armchair, placidly puffing a pipe.

THE three women were almost equally haggard; they all seemed older now. Zella Rice and Loretta Crider were together on a divan; Amy Standeven was seated apart. Locke stood in a corner of the room. He was armed, Eagle knew. Eagle himself was not. Hilda Neillson, presumably, was in the kitchen.

Eagle now opened his copy of "Who's Who" to the blood-drenched page listing names from Goss to Gwynne. Still standing in the archway, he read to himself the item about Stephen B. Grimshaw.

> Grimshaw, Stephen B., shipping and lumber; b. San Francisco, April 2, 1875. s. Jackson T. and Belle (Barker) J. Denison U. Granville, O. BS in CE 1896. Elec. V-pres. Grimshaw SS Co. 1904; elec. pres. Columbia River Logging Co. 1906. m Amy (Dawson) June 6, 1912 (divorced 1913). Was made chrm. comm. of raw materials, lumber and minerals—

But the rest of it did not matter. The one important word was the name "Amy."

Eagle closed the book and said to Mrs. Standeven, "May I have a word with you in private, please?"

She arose without change of expression and preceded him to the den across the hall.

He closed the door. "Will you be seated, please?"

Her eyes challenged him. She remained standing.

"Your maiden name was Amy Dawson?"

"It was."

"You married Stephen B. Grimshaw in 1912 and divorced him a year later?"

"I've never made any secret about it."

"At the separation Mr. Grimshaw settled twenty-five thousand a year on you for the period of your life?"

"That is correct."

"Regardless of whether you remarried."

"Yes. He knows I remarried. I sent him an announcement."

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"You did remarry when?"

"I married Paul Standeven in 1914."

"And still receive the annuity regularly from Grimshaw?"

"Correct. What about it?"

She was flushing angrily now.

"Your first husband will arrive here by plane in a little while. Are you willing to face him?"

Her eyes flashed.

"Why shouldn't I be? You're making yourself quite ridiculous. Is that all?"

"That is all."

She went out with her head high, and Eagle followed. When she resumed her seat in the library the high color still suffused her.

James Sherrill shifted uneasily. "If you don't mind," he said, "I'll go up to my room. This thing's getting me woozy."

He went out and up, taking the stairs three steps at a time.

The others remained in the library. Eagle whispered to Locke:

"Keep your eye on Standeven."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE IDENTIFICATION.

A SWIFT airplane, Eagle knew, was whirring north from Virginia to New Jersey. Each intense minute it was coming more than a mile nearer. The single cue now was to wait for it. Stephen B. Grimshaw himself must confront the Standevens.

"If Standeven moves from his chair, keep close to him," Eagle whispered to Locke. "Make sure he doesn't have a word in private with his wife."

"Leave him to me," Locke said. "If he's got a gun cached somewhere, it's a cinch I'll not let him grab it."

He took his post again in the corner, eyes on Standeven.

Standeven stared coldly back at him.

"They think, Paul," Mrs. Standeven said bitterly, "that I'm some sort of an impostor."

"It's absolutely crazy," muttered Standeven.

"Is that one of *my* bundles you have under your arm, Mr. Eagle?" Zella Rice asked. "I have some just like it in my room."

"I found this one in a tree," Eagle said with a smile.

"Just why," Standeven demanded sullenly, "are you accusing my wife?"

"Did your wife," Eagle asked him, "have a maid named Emma Benson when you married her twenty-one years ago?"

"She did. But what of it?"

"What became of Emma Benson?"

"How would I know? She quit us, about twenty years ago, and took another job."

"Are you sure," Eagle persisted, "that Emma Benson is not in the room now?"

Mrs. Standeven's laugh came in a shrill pitch. "Don't you see, Paul? This stupid Indian thinks *I'm* Emma Benson."

Standeven's answer was a snort.

Eagle said quietly:

"If you are not Emma Benson, Mr. Grimshaw will soon vindicate you. His plane will land on the fairway in an hour or so."

Standeven looked hard at Eagle.

"So *that's* it! You've cottoned to some cock-and-bull theory about my wife having been done away with twenty years ago, by her maid and myself, the maid then assuming my wife's name in order to collect each

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year from Steve Grimshaw? That's your case, is it?"

"Stop shouting, Paul," Mrs. Standeven said. "It won't help matters. When Mr. Grimshaw arrives he will, of course, know me. He knew my maid, too. He doesn't like me, of course. But at least he'll have to admit that I'm the woman he divorced."

Certainly a word from Grimshaw would prove it one way or another. They waited. The minutes dragged sluggishly. Eagle watched them. Most particularly he watched the Standevens. They had, he knew, lived much of the time abroad. If the woman was in truth Emma Benson, residence abroad would help to forward the deception. There would be less chance of meeting people who had known the Grimshaws.

"This is nonsense!" Aaron Crider exclaimed. "I can vouch for the Standevens. I met them years ago in Paris."

"How many years ago?"

"Eighteen," the banker said.

But Eagle considered that if the masquerade had been started *twenty* years ago, Crider's testimony was incompetent.

HE could understand why the Standevens had stood pat night before last, when and if challenged by Professor Veede. They could have put Veede off with some excuse designed to gain time. Later, after the murder of Veede, they would naturally stand pat to promote an innocent appearance.

They must have realized that an abrupt bolt would center upon them an especially bright searchlight of attention.

Naturally they would prefer a leisurely and unharassed departure with the other guests. Once departed from Lakehaven in good order, they could then plan a less conspicuous retreat. They had, of course, not expected the incriminating "Who's Who" to be salvaged. If it had not, at this minute they would be in exactly the same position as the others.

Certainly they were a bold couple. Especially the woman. The woman who, after collecting alimony in false character for twenty years, must have begun to fear that some rumor of suspicion might reach the trust fund executives of Stephen B. Grimshaw. What a bold stroke for Emma Benson deliberately to call at Grimshaw's West Coast office, permitting herself to be recognized!

Inevitably drawing from Grimshaw the inquiry: "Hello, Emma, are you still with Amy?" A perfect cue for the response: "No, sir. But I saw her recently. She is in good health."

Eagle looked at his watch, saw that a little more than an hour had passed since his conversation with Grimshaw. It meant that Grimshaw would now be halfway along on his flight.

More minutes dragged. The room grew sultry with tension. After a while Eagle took the bundle from under his arm.

"Mrs. Standeven," he asked, "in the department store yesterday did you stray away from the others?"

"We separated, if that's what you mean."

"You hurried to a bank, then, and did your shopping at a safety bank box?"

"I most assuredly did not."

"Do you claim this bundle?"

"If it's the merchandise I bought at Markles, yes. If not, no."

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Major Eagle opened the bundle.

He exposed currency and a case of jewels.

"Does anyone claim this?"

He placed the open package on a table where they could all see.

"Imagine!" cried Zella Rice.

There were gasps and stares. No one claimed the bundle. No one appeared more surprised than the Standevens.

To Eagle the accused pair seemed to be entirely confident of vindication. They were unabashed. Brazenly they awaited and challenged an inspection by Stephen Grimshaw.

"Do you suggest," Standeven inquired with irony, "that my wife hid one of her bundles in a tree?"

"If she did," Eagle smiled, "it was later. I saw the bundles all brought in and taken upstirs."

At that time, of course, the woman wouldn't have known about the murder of Veede. Probably she hadn't anticipated the murder of Veede.

"Just be patient, Paul. Fortunately I haven't changed much in twenty years, except that I'm older. Steve Grimshaw will know me and put this silly business straight. Emma Benson had blue eyes, didn't she, Paul?"

"I think so," Standeven said.

"And mine are brown."

The woman turned and borrowed a cigarette from Weatherbee.

EVERY clue and condition, Eagle thought, pointed to her guilt except one. That exception was her present attitude of cocksureness, the bold insistence with which she even welcomed the arrival of Grimshaw.

It wouldn't be long now. Shadows were growing outside. At more than a mile a minute Grimshaw was speeding north along the Delaware River.

"What's more," the accused woman said, "I brought exactly five bundles from town. Every one of them are in my room now."

Then, outside the house, Eagle heard the motor of a car. There was a grind of gears hastily shifted. The wheels of a vehicle whirred on the gravel drive.

The sound receded. Meaning that it was not an arrival but a departure. Eagle stepped quickly to the front door and out upon the porch. He was just in time to see a blue coupé disappear at a turn of a wooded lane.

Eagle ran down the steps and hurried back to the garage. Eric Pitt was seated on a stool, reading a magazine.

"Who drove away just now?"

"It was Mr. Sherrill," Pitt said. "Why, was I supposed to stop him?"

Eagle worried. With all evidence pointing toward the Standevens, why should Sherrill run away?"

"Did he have baggage?"

"Sure. And he came out of the back way. He said he was tired of being stood on the carpet, and was off to consult counsel. Not only that, but he said there's a gun loose in the house and he didn't want to be on deck when somebody starts using it."

There was an extension telephone in the garage. Eagle went to it and called the office of the county sheriff.

"Is Jarlow or Pryde there?"

He was told that Jarlow had not returned from Scranton; nor had Pryde returned from New York.

"Then please ask the police and all available county officers to intercept James Sherrill on the highways, if they can. He just left Lakehaven in a blue coupé.

"He's your man, is he?"

"I didn't think so a minute ago. In

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fact, there's nothing against him except that he ran away."

"We'll try to pick him up, Major."

Eagle went outside and saw that the sun would soon set beyond Senator Foxheart's lake. It was past six o'clock. Then he saw a dot in the southern sky. As he watched it, it came nearer. It was an airplane soaring directly toward Lakehaven.

Grimshaw!

"Pitt," Eagle said, "that airplane will land on the nearest fairway. It brings us a Mr. Steven Grimshaw. Please meet it and guide him to the house."

Eagle himself hurried back to the group in the library. It was imperative that he keep an eye on the Standevens. He found them as assured as before. "Mr. Grimshaw will be here in a few minutes," he said.

Even that did not in any manner confound the Standevens.

Standeven said easily: "The sooner the better. After he identifies my wife, then you can back up and take a fresh start."

Now they could all hear the motor of a plane as it roared over the house.

"That's Steve, is it? Good!" the accused woman said.

It couldn't, Eagle thought, be pure bravado. The Standevens either were innocent, or else they had something definite to gain by the summoning of Grimshaw.

THE sound of the plane receded. Then came nearer again. It had banked somewhere over the golf course and was heading back this way. Grimshaw would now be landing on the nearest fairway.

Tension here in the library grew, like the bubbles of a boiling pot. A crisis was certain to break now, and under the shadow of it every face drew taut and every muscle strained. Locke still stood in a corner with a hand in his gun pocket, his eyes on Standeven.

Squarely in the arched exit stood Eagle, erect and dark and straight as an arrow. He watched and listened. He heard footsteps now, crunching the gravel outside. Two were coming.

Eric Pitt was ushering Grimshaw to this room.

They were entering into the hall now.

"Here he is, Mr. Grimshaw," Pitt's voice said.

Eagle turned. He saw a stocky man of affairs with silver hair and a rubicund complexion.

"Good evening, sir. I'm the district attorney you spoke with over the phone."

Eagle smiled and shook hands.

"Will you make this," Grimshaw said gruffly, "as short as possible? I want to reach Cleveland tonight."

"It will only take three questions, Mr. Grimshaw."

Eagle stepped aside, exposing the group in the library.

He pointed to Standeven. "Do you know that man?"

"Yes, by sight," Grimshaw acknowledged. "He's Paul Standeven, the second husband of my divorced wife."

"Do you see your divorced wife in the room?"

Grimshaw looked at all of them.

"No, she is not here," he said.

Eagle asked, "Do you see Emma Benson, who was once your wife's maid?"

"I do. A bit older, but I know her well enough." Grimshaw pointed.

The woman they had known as Amy Standeven stood up. She was haggard now, and her shoulders drooped.

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Paul Standeven remained seated. But they saw him shrug and make a despairing gesture.

"There is just one thing more, Mr. Eagle," Emma Benson said, "that you should know."

"I shall be glad to hear it."

"It is that Luther Veede jumped to a wrong conclusion. The motive being clear to him, he presumed that Paul and I had conspired to murder Amy Standeven."

"He did mention murder," Eagle admitted, "for the gain of five hundred thousand dollars. And he said two were in it."

"There was no murder," the woman said. "A country doctor named Cooper at Conniston, Maine, can prove there was no murder. Mrs. Standeven died suddenly of acute pneumonia. We were at a north woods cottage, properly registered as Mr. and Mrs. Standeven and maid. When the doctor arrived we simply told him that his patient was the maid. A few minutes later she died."

"And the doctor in good faith made out a death certificate in the name of Emma Benson?"

"That is right."

GRIMSHAW'S voice roared at her:

"And you've bilked me out of twenty-five thousand a year for the last twenty years? I'll see you in prison!"

She said desperately: "No, you won't. Because I've been prepared for this moment a long time."

Her hand came quickly from the pocket of her dress, and Eagle saw between her thumb and forefinger a white capsule. She clapped it to her mouth and swallowed.

"Good-by," she said.

Almost instantly her face contorted. Her eyes rolled terribly. Then she swayed and fell to the floor.

Eagle, calling for Dr. Rice, sprang forward and kneeled beside her. Zella Rice shrieked. Locke yelled, "Poison!" and came with a jump to Eagle's side. Every man in the room was there now, except one.

Eagle heard the crash of a vase. He looked up. He saw Paul Standeven with his back to a wall, a pistol in his hand.

Locke yelled, "Look out, Major!" He was tugging a gun belatedly from his own pocket when Standeven fired. The bullet drilled through Locke's wrist. His revolver flew across the room. Zella Rice screamed again.

Standeven shouted, "Don't move, any of you!"

But Eagle made a dive for him.

Standeven fired again, and Eagle fell at his feet. A bullet had plowed along his scalp, creasing his black hair with crimson.

Standeven said, "Get up, Emma."

Emma Benson stood up.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ESCAPE.

SHE picked up Locke's revolver. Locke was on his knees, groaning, nursing a broken arm. Cries from Loretta Crider joined those of Zella Rice, Crider, Rice, Weatherbee, Grimshaw, and Pitt stood in confusion and petrifaction, under the menacing gun of Standeven.

He warned them, "If I have to, I'll kill. Emma, go open the cellar door."

She stepped over the stunned form of Major Eagle and went to the rear of the hall. There she opened a door giving to cellar steps.

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"Stand two abreast and march," Standeven said to the others.

He marched them to the cellar door. Hilda Neillson, having heard a disturbance, appeared from the kitchen to investigate. She was herded with the rest into the cellar.

Standeven slammed the door, turned the key and shouted:

"The outside door's already locked. I've been preparing for this all day. Remain quiet for ten minutes. Then break out if you can."

Standeven took his hat from the hall rack. The woman took a hat and wrap for herself.

"No time for baggage," Standeven said.

He did, however, stop to rewrap the shopping package in the same Markles' paper. With this under his arm they went out.

"What was in that capsule?"

"Aspirin," she said.

"Don't hurry, Emma. We're just two house guests strolling curiously out for a look at that plane."

Standeven's hand was in his coat pocket, gripping a pistol there. They walked without haste across the lawn toward the golf course.

The Grimshaw airplane was parked on the nearest fairway. Its pilot was squatting idly by it, chewing a grass stem.

"It'll be warm and ready," Standeven said. "Grimshaw was planning to make Cleveland tonight."

Assuming friendy smiles, they sauntered on to the fairway.

"Is the boss about ready to blow?" the pilot asked. He arose genially.

"No, but *we* are." Standeven's face hardened. He took the gun from his pocket and held it to the pilot's ribs.

"Ouch!" the man yelled. "What's going on?"

"We are, and you with us. Climb in, Emma."

It was a four-seater plane. The woman got into the rear cockpit.

"Self-starter?" Standeven asked the pilot.

There was. The man was forced to take his seat and start the motor. Paul Standeven took the seat beside him.

"Take off," he said.

The click of a cocked gun made the pilot take off. The plane taxied down the fairway and then soared. It circled, mounting higher, cleared the red roof of Lakehaven, and flew south.

"Get a mile high. Then head for Florida." Paul Standeven pushed the gun harder against the man's body.

"Yes, sir."

THE machine zoomed. At five thousand feet, Standeven turned and told Emma to look downward. She said she could see the Delaware River.

"Where," the pilot gasped, "are we going?"

"The lady and I are heading south. But you can get off any time you wish."

"You mean that?"

"Exactly. I've worn out two or three of these crates myself. Put on a bag and jump."

The pilot was already dragging a parachute from under his seat. Standeven held a steady grip on the stick while he strapped it on.

In a minute more the frightened aviator was out on a wing.

Standeven said, "Pick your spot. And happy landing!"

The pilot stepped into mile-high space.

Standeven leaned from the cockpit and looked down. He saw the chute open with a jerk, then sway lower in dizzy zigzags.

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"We'll keep this course," Standeven called over his shoulder, "until we're out of sight."

He climbed higher. In ten minutes he veered to the east. Dusk was falling. When the gloom was thicker, he turned northwest.

"Will we make Lake Flambeau tonight, Paul?"

On a desolate shore of Lac du Flambeau, in northern Wisconsin, Standeven had for a long time maintained a furnished cabin. He had acquired it in fee simple under an alias, all the while aware that he might some day need it for a final retreat.

"Of course not," he answered. "If an abandoned plane is found near there it would be a dead give-away. We'll have to land at least a hundred miles from it. Then we can go on by bus or train."

For an hour there was no sound but the whirring motor. Dark deepened about them. Emma Benson crawled forward into the seat beside her pilot.

"'We fly to Flambeau,'" Standeven quoted with a chuckle.

It was a message he had flashed in the Lakehaven library.

"I almost didn't get it, Paul," she said.

"It was a tough spot," he admitted. "That constable was watching like a hawk, and I couldn't get a word alone with you. So the best I could do was write it on the sole of my shoe."

"You did that while the Indian lawyer had me in the den?"

"Yes, and no one saw me do it. My back was to the constable, and the others were chattering among themselves. Then I took care not to cross my knees again until you had all the attention."

"Where did you get the chalk?"

"Billiard chalk. I was knocking the billiard balls around this morning."

"It beats dodging motorcycles on the highway," she agreed.

THE woman was quick-witted. The first plan had been for her to fake a faint, if things seemed to be getting too hot, drawing attention to herself while Paul took a pistol from the vase. Then they were to fight their way to an automobile.

She had been on the verge of pretending the faint immediately after coming out of the den with Eagle.

Glancing toward Paul for a cue, she had seen him cross his knees with the sole of his shoe facing her way.

"We fly to Flambeau" was chalked on the sole.

Instantly she had accepted the new strategy. Grimshaw was coming in a plane. The thing to do was to stand pat and welcome his arrival.

"You're certain, Paul, that no one saw it but me?"

"Positive. When I flashed it every eye in the room was on you."

They soared on, flying blind now. In a little while they could smell Lake Erie under them. They saw lights marking boats.

Detroit came under them like a field of fallen stars.

Past midnight they landed perilously on a Michigan beach. There they deserted the plane. With no baggage but the Markles bundle, they walked to the nearest town and boarded a train.

Morning found them in lower Wisconsin. They were on a bus now. At Madison they separated. The man went to one hotel, the woman to another. A day later they met at Chippewa Falls. Standeven wore leathers and boots. He was unshaven. A corduroy cap with loose flaps gave him the look of a countryman. Emma Benson had dyed her hair and was dressed like a farmwife.

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Each of them carried a suitcase labeled with the name "C. Black." Charles Black was the alias under which Standeven had acquired the Lac du Flambeau cabin.

By bus they went to Namakagon and there bought a second-hand flivver. In this, through long woody lanes, they drove toward Lac du Flambeau.

The cabin there, with a stout Yale lock on the door, was as they had last seen it. With a sigh of relief Standeven mounted the porch. There would, of course, be no more of those checks from the Grimshaw estate. But the Standevens had not been too improvident. Savings worth in all about forty thousand dollars were snugly tucked in one of the suitcases, still wrapped in the Markles wrapper.

Standeven unlocked the door, opened it, stepped inside.

Sight of a tall, erect man with a lock of overhanging black hair, in the center of the room, confounded him. The man's arms were folded and he was smiling.

A policeman stood at either of his elbows.

Paul Standeven dropped his baggage.

"*You!*" he cried. "How did you track us?"

The simple answer, though, instantly shocked into his own brain. His shoe must have left a chalked footprint on the rug at Lakehaven.

"Was that it?" he murmured.

Major Eagle bowed in assent. "I am an Indian," he said.

THE END

***Tom Eagle* is a new ARGOSY character. Watch for a long story about him.**

The Most Trodden Bridge

A LONG way from the Brooklyn Bridge is the span which is supposed to have carried the most people. This is the Alcantara Bridge over the River Tagus in Spain, finished by Romans in A.D. 106. During its 1800 years of service the bridge is estimated to have carried about 400 million people.

Today the bridge is as good as new, even the Roman pavement being intact. Built of huge stone blocks, it consists of five arches and is about one hundred and eighty feet above the river at the center. Each of the two central arches spans a hundred feet, although no mortar was used.

—*James Arthur.*

The Largest Pocket Knife

CALLED the most complicated pocket knife ever made, a piece of cutlery turned out in Sheffield several years ago has seventy-five blades and attachments. These include corkscrews, gimlets, punches, scrapers, two saws, a button hook, a fork, a toothpick, calipers, screw drivers, bodkins, pruning hooks, tweezers and scissors. Most of the blades are heavily etched. To make the knife required two years.

—*Robert Jones.*

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The APPIAN WAY

"QUEEN OF ROADS"

THE APPIAN WAY and Tomb of Caecilia Metella, a circular structure 65 Ft. in diameter.

AFTER twenty-two centuries, this most famous of all the Roman roads is still partially in use. Begun in the year 312 B.C., Appius Claudius Cæcus planned its route and superintended its construction.

The highway, built on a carefully laid foundation of cemented rocks, was paved with large hexagonal blocks of basaltic lava, precisely fitted together. Originally it ran only as far as Capua, a distance of 132 miles, but as more and more of the peninsula was conquered, it was extended to Benevento, Venusia, Taranto, and Brindisi—altogether 366 miles over mountain, marsh, and plain. Well-preserved bridges still attest the skill and resourcefulness of the engineers who were in charge. Stone mileposts remain to trace the route where the roadway itself has disappeared.

For the first few miles out of Rome, the highway was lined with tombs, among them those of the great Roman family, the Scipios. The poet Statius well named this road, which connected the capital city with all Southern Italy, *Regina Viarum*, "the queen of roads."

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Henry started to get away from that spot

The Sheriff of Tonto Town

By W. C. TUTTLE

Chasing cattle rustlers leads Henry to the biggest discovery ever made in Wild Horse Valley

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

WILD HORSE VALLEY, in Arizona, was rather a peaceful place when Henry Harrison Conroy, retired actor, went there to take over the J Bar C ranch which he had inherited, but Henry's troubles soon began when he was elected sheriff.

Henry didn't want the job, and no one was more surprised than he when he got it.

He established headquarters in Tonto City, appointed Judge Van Treece, an old lawyer, as his deputy, and Oscar Johnson as jailer.

Mining activity was springing up around Tonto City, one of the leading operators being Jack West, who had gained the start of his fortune many years before by cheating his partners, Parke Neal and Tom Silver, out of their share of the Three Partners mine.

Tom Silver, vowing revenge, his identity concealed by a terrible scar on his face, got a job as swamper in Jack West's Tonto Saloon.

When one of West's mine shipments was reported stolen, Henry was asked to resign as sheriff, which he did. Lou James, one of West's men, was appointed in his stead.

Henry retired to the J Bar C, where Danny Regan, his foreman, reported that J Bar C cattle were being rustled and poisoned.

At the Tonto Saloon, Doc Sargent, head gambler for West, discovered that a girl named Lola, a faro dealer, had been threatening to disclose West's past. Lola shot and killed Sargent, and Tom Silver arranged things for her so that it looked as though Sargent had been killed in a gun fight with another West gunman, slain by Silver.

This story began in the Argosy for September 14

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CHAPTER XII.

THE LOST MINE.

THE J Bar C men were away from the ranch before daylight next morning, heading straight for the water-hole known as Moses' Well. This was a sizeable trickle from between two huge rocks in a shallow arroyo. There was a small, mud-bank reservoir. Several head of cattle were drinking, and many more had finished by the time the six riders reached the spot, but there did not seem to be any fatalities.

"Well, it's a cinch they ain't poisoned this one—yet," said Danny. "Henry, and you, Judge, hide yore horses in the brush above the water, and then h i d e yoreselves in a spot where yuh can look things over. Stay there until we drift cattle in here; and if any stranger shows up, let 'em get up to the water. But at their first move to put anythin' into the water—blast hell out of 'em."

The four men rode away, and Henry and Judge proceeded to hide their horses, after which they sprawled in the brush behind rocks near the water. It would be h o u r s before the four riders could possibly be able to move that bunch of cattle.

"Destiny is a queer thing," mused Henry. "Only a few months ago I had never been outside a city, never lived any place except in a hotel. My only impression of the West was gained from seeing a stage play, 'The Squaw Man.' Have you ever seen it, Judge?"

"No, I never have, Henry. But I have seen many squaw-men in real life."

"I suppose they all had the same experience. But what I meant to convey was the fact that here I am, hiding in the brush, far out in the wilderness, longing for an opportunity to slay a man. I suppose I should slink—and gnash my teeth. But I am too fat to slink, and I never was a successful gnasher. I wonder if it would help the illusion if I grew a fierce mustache."

"You would look like a walrus, Henry."

"Yes, I suppose—a desert walrus. Oh, well, I suppose there is no u s e. Even the horses protest. Did you note the actions of that buckskin horse of mine, Judge? He groaned dismally when I vaulted into the saddle—or was that a vault? And you'd have thought he had an anvil on each of his four feet. And would you believe it, in my callow youth, I actually dreamed of being a jockey. I suppose I had visions of winning by a nose."

"Sh-h-h-h!" hissed Judge. "Look! Two riders coming! Down that way, Henry. I saw them above the brush."

Henry started to get up, but Judge jerked him down.

"Oh, that is right; I forgot," grunted Henry, "you do the looking."

"They are watching the place," reported Judge. "Perhaps they suspect."

"Good!" sighed Henry. "Perhaps they will depart in peace."

Fully two minutes passed before Judge issued another verbal bulletin.

"They are coming on," he whispered. "They are very close, Henry. Now—they stop. Dismounting now. One of them has a package in his hands. Sit up easy, Henry, and have your gun ready."

Carefully Judge cocked both barrels of the shotgun.

KER-WHOOM! both barrels of that shotgun went off, sending buckshot skittering through the brush. The butt of the gun was against

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Judge's middle, as he was shifting it to a shooting position, and the recoil knocked the breath out of his lungs.

The two men darted for the brush, drawing their guns. The heavy, black-powder shotgun loads threw up a cloud of smoke.

Zee-e-e-e! A revolver bullet dug into the dirt, showering Henry with sand and gravel.

Sping! Another bullet ricocheted off Henry's rifle barrel, and he went crawling away from that spot.

Henry's objective was an outcropping of sandstone farther up the hill, where he believed he might be well above the two men. He had lost track of Judge, until he heard that shotgun roar again, and another puff of smoke eddied above the brush. Again those six-shooters cracked spitefully, sending bullets through that smoke-screen.

Now that Henry knew their attention was all upon Judge, he scuttled faster. He was so intent upon speed that he lost sight of that pile of sandstone. As a matter of fact, he came out above it. At his right was a rather deep arroyo, with precipitous banks. By standing erect Henry could see the two horses which the two strangers had abandoned, and the shooting had caused them to move farther away, dragging their reins. Henry looked around cautiously. By going straight ahead, along the ridge, he must surely get in above the two men. Stooping as low as possible, which lowered him fully six inches, he began moving slowly, his eyes very alert.

In fact, he was so alert to danger at his left that he did not notice that the bank on the right side was undercut. Suddenly the solid-appearing sandy silt broke loose, and Henry found himself falling into the arroyo.

He dropped straight down for a dozen feet, landed on a sandy shelf, which broke loose, and went rolling like a barrel to the bottom of the sandy arroyo, but still clinging to his rifle.

For several moments he sat there, dazed and winded, staring back at the top of the bank, where the sand and dirt were still sifting down the hill. A peculiar gurgling moan caused him to shift his eyes. Twenty feet away, under the overhang of the bank, was an old spotted cow, just surging to her feet, and beside her was a very young calf.

She was an old mossy-horn, scarred and skinny, who had probably had many a battle in defense of her offspring. She twisted quickly, her rump against the bank, head down, a warning rumble in her lanky throat. Henry was on his feet, panting heavily, as he backed away in the sand.

Then he turned and began running up the arroyo, with the old cow bucking and twisting behind him, bawling angrily. Henry went through, or over the brush, like a runaway tank. He went out of that arroyo, leaped over a Spanish-bayonet clump which was on the edge of an adjoining arroyo, landed on the seat of his pants, and went all the way to the bottom, where he landed in a cat-claw bush.

AND that was the end of the race, as far as Henry was concerned. All the belligerent mother-cows on the J Bar C could not get action out of Henry now. He had slid the seat out of his pants, and was sitting in a cat-claw, but he did not mind. He still had his rifle.

Slowly he crawled out of the bush and looked around. A short distance down the arroyo was a rocky overhang, and under this were evidences that someone had camped there. Henry

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started for the spot, but he heard the sound of running hoofs, the crashing of brush.

A rider was racing around the upper end of the arroyo, partly concealed in the brush. Henry braced his legs far apart, flung up the rifle, and without even attempting to aim the weapon, pulled the trigger. The heavy weapon bucked wickedly, but Henry had the satisfaction of seeing the rider's sombrero flip off his head. An instant more and the rider swept on out of sight.

Cautiously Henry made his way up the arroyo and climbed out at the upper end. He knew that the rider did not stop to pick up his hat; and this hat might be evidence. Henry found it, snagged on a mesquite bush. Through the top of it was a jagged hole; and on the sweat-band were the two initials—D.R.

Henry quickly replaced the hat, and made his way through the brush. Someone was calling his name. It sounded like Oscar's voice.

"Yoo-hoo-o-o-o!" answered Henry. He reached the slope down to Moses' Well, and was tearing his way through the brush when they met him.

Danny, Frijole, Oscar and Slim—with Judge panting along, carrying the shotgun.

"They—they got away!" panted Judge. "The boys arrived too late. Are you unhurt, Henry? My God, look at your pants!"

"I can not turn around that far," replied Henry, soberly. "You let them get away, Judge?"

"I had little to do with it—they merely went. And, if I may ask, sir, what were you doing?"

"I?" Henry grounded his rifle. "Why, I—well, I attempted to flank them, Judge, when the bank broke away, and I was nearly deposited in the lap of a belligerent cow. I presume she thought I came to take her baby."

"And she took to yuh, eh?"

"Not quite *to* me," corrected Henry. "She lacked the necessary speed. Since then I have been—well, coming back."

"Anyway," said Danny, "you stopped 'em—and that's somethin'. One of 'em shot my hat off—but I was goin' too fast to even make a guess where the shot came from. But I shore heard that bullet."

"You should be more careful, Danny," said Henry soberly.

"Well, we heard the shootin', Henry; so we came back."

"I'm very glad you did. By the way, over there in an arroyo, I saw where someone had been camping. I did not examine it, but—

"Campin'?" queried Danny. "Say, we'll jist look into that. Mebbe that bad bunch is livin' out here in the hills. Can yuh find it again?"

"I believe I can, Danny."

"How far over is it?"

"I believe," replied Henry soberly, "you go to the top of this slope. From there it is one fall, a cow-chase and a long slide."

"That's like a Kentucky distance," laughed Slim. "A look, two whoops and a brook."

DANNY found his hat, and they examined the bullet hole in the crown.

"That's what I call damn good shootin'," said Danny. "Pickin' the hat off a man's head while his horse is buck-jumpin' this brush."

"A proficiency I hope to never attain," sighed Henry.

"You won't," consoled Slim. "You allus shut yore eyes and jerk the trigger."

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"I know," nodded Henry. "Sorry, but that is my way."

They went into the arroyo, and Henry pointed out the spot. There were evidences of many small campfires, empty cans stacked neatly against the rocky wall. Two old rawhide packsacks were full of assorted foodstuffs, and a blackened coffee pot still contained coffe-grounds. A canvas covered roll of blankets, rolled up, gave them their clue to the owner. An old, empty envelope, on which were penciled figures, showed the address of Parke Neal, Tonto City.

"Parke Neal!" exclaimed Judge. "This was his camp. No wonder it hasn't been found!"

Danny quickly examined the bottom of the arroyo for tracks, and went striding down the soft sand, with the rest of the men following. Two hundred feet below the old camp, deep in a side arroyo, where the heavy brush almost concealed it, they found Parke Neal's prospect hole.

Here was an outcropping of brown quartz, into which Neal had driven a tunnel about six feet in depth. Judge knew something of mining. He examined the face of the little drift closely, picked up several pieces of the scattered rock, and turned, an expression of amazement on his long, lean face.

"My God!" he exclaimed softly. "A bonanza! Look at that stuff!"

"Yumpin' Yee-ru-u-u-salem!" exploded Oscar.

JUDGE searched his pockets and drew out an old envelope. With the stub of a pencil between his long fingers, he sat down and began writing swiftly.

"Is this just a sudden whim, or are you writing out your will?" queried Henry.

"I'm writing a location notice, sir. The six of us claim this as our legal property. Parke Neal never recorded this mine; so it is legal for us to take it. Now, what will we name it? Who has an appropriate name?"

"What color was that calf, Henry?" asked Danny.

"Sort of a yellow, I believe, Danny."

"That is it!" exclaimed Judge. "The Golden Calf. I shall locate six claims around this point of discovery, all under the one name. There! Oscar, go back and get me one of those empty cans. I shall put this notice in the can, and place it in a prominent position.

"Danny, you and Slim and Oscar go ahead and bring the cattle to this range, while Henry and I go to Tonto City and see that this is recorded at once. I believe we can find our way across the hills to Tonto City."

"You will pardon me, I am sure, Judge," said Henry, "but we will go first to the ranch."

"This, sir, is something that can not be delayed. Do you realize, sir, that this is worth a million dollars?"

"And, sir," retorted Henry, "do you realize that I have no seat in my pants? This gold may have blinded you—but I am sure it has not affected the optic nerves of the good folks of Tonto City."

"Go ahead," laughed Danny. "It's a cinch that them poisoners won't make another attempt today. C'mon, you saddleslickin' millionaires; let's go!"

Henry and Judge got on their gentle horses and started for the ranch.

"Do you really believe it is a bonanza?" asked Henry.

"Henry, it is another Mint."

As they rode through the hills, Judge scratched his head thoughtfully as he looked back several times.

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"I can't quite figure it out," he admitted.

"What is the problem?" asked Henry.

"It is about those two men, Henry. I am very positive that they rode directly east. In fact, I saw them disappear in that direction."

"No one has disproved that, has he, Judge?"

"I haven't mentioned it to anyone, until now. But if they went east, how on earth could one of them shoot the hat off Danny Regan's head, when he came in from the north, almost directly after I saw them disappear to the eastward?"

Henry shook his head slowly.

"It is rather remarkable," he admitted. "But as I have often said, Judge, anything might happen in Arizona."

CHAPTER XIII.

CLAIM JUMPERS.

JACK WEST leaned against the counter in the recorder's office, chewing on a black cigar, as he thumbed the pages of the mining records. Only a clerk was working in the office at this time of the day; a tall, slatternly young man, with a narrow chin. West studied him as he stood at a high desk, copying with a pen.

"Yo're a new man around here, ain't yuh?" asked West.

The young man closed the book and came over to the counter.

"Yes, I've only been here a short time," he answered.

"Do yuh like it here?"

"Well, I ain't crazy about it."

"What does this job pay yuh?"

"Seventy-five a month. I'm on extra now. A feller must eat."

"That's right," nodded West, his eyes thoughtful. He glanced around the empty room, and lowered his voice.

"What would yuh do if yuh had a thousand dollars?"

The young man grinned lazily.

"A thousand dollars? Huh! I dunno, mister. That's a lot of money. Well, I wouldn't stay in this place, that's a sure thing."

"Nothin' to keep yuh here, eh? I mean, if yuh had a thousand."

"I should say there isn't—not me."

"Fine! You know who I am—Jack West. Come over to the Tonto Saloon tonight, about nine o'clock. I'll be lookin' for yuh—and we might make a deal that will pay yuh a thousand dollars."

"Yeah?" The young man looked keenly at West. "Wait a minute. I'm not going in on any deals that might put me behind the bars."

"I wouldn't ask you to, son. You merely do me a favor, get on the stage and pull out, one thousand dollars richer."

"I'll be over at nine o'clock," nodded the clerk, and Jack West smiled to himself as he went back to the saloon.

He was standing at the bar, enjoying a drink with the bartender, when a commotion outside caused him to go to the doorway. Lou James, the sheriff, was getting painfully off his horse. One eye was swollen completely shut, and the other nearly so. His nose was swollen, lips puffed, and one ear was swollen all out of shape.

"What on earth happened to you?" exclaimed West. James peered at him through his one usable eye, swore bitterly and leaned against a porch-post.

"Did somebody beat yuh up like that?" asked West. "Come back to the office where we can be alone. You need a drink, Lou."

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TAKING the sheriff away from the curious onlookers, West led him back to the office, where James sank down in a chair. West handed him the private bottle, and Lou drank noisily.

"That tastes good," he muttered. "I shore needed it."

"Now, what in the devil happened to you?"

"Yesterday afternoon," said the sheriff, "Conroy and Van Treece came to my office and told me that somebody was poisoning their water-holes. They swore that a dozen cows died around the one they call Crazy Woman Springs. I reckon they got mad because I didn't rush right down there.

"Anyway, I decided to go down there today. Let me have another shot of that stuff; I need it."

"Take a big one, Lou; and go on with yore story."

"Thanks. Well, I rode alone down there, and got off at the spring, when that damn Swede raised up from behind the brush, covered me with his gun, and came over to me. He took my gun and threw it in the brush, then threw his own along with it, and then he said:

"'Ay vars ordered to shoot, but Ay radder fight.'

"Well, I done my best. God, that Swede hits like the kick of a mule!"

"Yeah, I realize that. Yo're big enough to handle him, Lou."

"That's all right. When he hits you on the chin, size don't mean a damn thing. I only remember gettin' hit once."

"Are you goin' to stand for 'em treatin' yuh like that, Lou?"

"I don't know what I'm goin' to do, except that I'm goin' down and see if Doctor Bogart can take some of the swellin' out."

"Was there really a dozen dead cows down there?"

"I reckon there is; I didn't count 'em."

"Well, don't forget that yo're the sheriff of this county."

"That don't save yuh from a crazy Swede who wants to fight."

"WITH conditions as they are, we should be at the ranch, my dear," said Henry, "but neither Judge nor myself could resist the temptation of dropping in near suppertime. You really have no idea how Frijole Bill can mistreat food."

"I am sure you are always welcome here, Henry," smiled Mrs. Harper. "Leila and I were anxious for more news, too. Someone said that Oscar nearly killed the sheriff yesterday."

"Yes, I'm afraid he did," sighed Henry. "What he will do next, no man knoweth. He elected himself to guard that water-hole, and the mere fact that the intruder happened to be the sheriff meant nothing to Oscar."

"Is Danny helping guard the water?" asked Leila anxiously.

"Danny and Slim went over to examine Moses' Well today," said Judge. "Oscar is still searching for cattle which might drift back to Crazy Woman Springs. They have dug out the water-hole, but still have it covered, because we have no way of testing it."

They sat down to supper, and Henry grew expansive, telling the woman about their Golden Calf mine.

"Is it really so rich?" asked Leila in amazement.

"The richest prospect in Arizona," declared Judge. "In fact, it is my opinion that it will prove richer than the Three Partners."

"It seems to me," said Henry, "that

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all prospects are compared to the Three Partners. Why not compare the Golden Calf with the mines of Solomon? Or was Solomon a miner?"

"As much of a miner as Jack West," laughed Judge.

"I saw Jack West today," said Leila. "That is the first time I have ever seen him. He owned the Three Partners, did he not?"

"Jack West, I believe, was the original discoverer," replied Judge. "That was over twenty years ago, when Maricopa was a small group of rough shacks. Life was hard in those days. Jack West had three partners, I believe. One was Parke Neal, and the other is rather a mystery man. I have heard that West beat Parke Neal out of his share of the mine. However, I have seen the record, and West's is the only name to appear. Neal swears that West had nothing to do with the discovery of the Three Partners. He intimated, I believe, that West got rid of their third partner. Perhaps he did. West is shrewd, and as unscrupulous as a wolverine.

"There is no doubt that the Three Partners was the richest gold property in the State. West sold it for a cold million dollars. But I firmly believe that the Golden Calf is as rich, if not richer. Just as soon as we can have an expert—"

Someone was rattling the door of the millinery shop, and Leila hurried from the room. It was Danny and Slim, two very excited young cowboys.

"They're tryin' to jump our claim!" blurted Danny.

"Jump it?" queried Judge. "Impossible! Our property is duly recorded. Sit down, boys; you seem all upset."

"I hope yo're right," said Danny. "Me and Slim was over at Moses' Well, lookin' things over, when we heard several blasts. They didn't seem far away so we went over and looked at our mine. Nothin' had been touched; so we sat down, wonderin' where the blastin' was bein' done. We was there about half an hour, when two more went off. They was so close that we could feel the earth shake.

"Not over four or five hundred feet away, over in a gulch, north of our claim, we found three men workin' on a mine. We rode in on 'em and asked what they were doin' there. One feller, he said his name was Jim Short, claimed to have located the mine a couple of weeks ago, and told us to go and look at the records. Their property covers all our Golden Calf."

"Why, that is incredible!" exclaimed Judge.

"That ain't the word I used," said Danny, "but I reckon it means the same thing. Me and Slim came here as fast as we could."

Judge got slowly to his feet, looking at his watch.

"The records must show," he muttered. "We still have fifteen minutes before the office closes. Let us have a look at the records."

A FEW minutes later the four men clattered into the recorder's office, and demanded to see the book of mining records. Only the gray-haired recorder was in the office. Judge swiftly turned the pages to the recorded notice of the Golden Calf. On the preceding page was the recorded notice of the Lucky Hunch Mining Co., dated ten days ahead of the Golden Calf. It recorded five full claims, headed by the name of Jim Short. The other four were out-of-state addresses.

Their dreams of wealth vanished as

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they leaned against the counter and looked dumbly at each other. Henry turned the book around and looked at it keenly.

"Judge," he said huskily, "where is the returned notice of the Golden Calf?"

"Here," replied Judge, and took it from his inside pocket. On the front fold of the notice was the pen-written notation of book and page: Book 2—Page 200. Henry glanced at it, and called the recorder.

"Where is the young man who was here when we had this recorded?"

"Why," smiled the recorder, "he decided to quit. Yesterday he took the stage for Scorpion Bend. I believe he was going to California. Is there anything wrong, gentlemen?"

"This location record," replied Henry, "shows that it was recorded on page two hundred; *and there is no page two hundred in this book.*"

He turned the book around, and the recorder looked at it closely.

"Well, isn't that queer? No, there isn't. I suppose the young man made a mistake."

"I am very much afraid that there was no mistake, sir," said Henry coldly. "If you will examine it closely, you will see where the page has been removed with a sharp knife."

Deep in the binding was the evidence.

"But I don't understand it," protested the recorder, puzzled.

"I do, sir," said Henry. "But the man who did it has gone to California—and California is a mighty big State."

They left the old courthouse and stood on the sidewalk together.

"Plain highway robbery," said Judge bitterly. "The clerk was bribed to remove the page, after which he recorded that Lucky Hunch, setting the date back ten days, and finally recorded our mine again, and on the next page."

"What can be done about it?" queried Henry.

"The law," replied Judge, "would decide against us."

"Law be damned!" gritted Danny. "Let me and Slim and Oscar settle this deal."

"Let us be sensible," said Henry. "I suggest that we go home. Unless I am mistaken, Frijole finished a fresh batch of prune juice yesterday. This is the first million I have ever lost—and I need something to cushion the shock."

That night, while Henry, Judge, Frijole and Oscar mourned their loss in prune whisky, Danny and Slim slipped out to the stable, saddled their horses and rode back quietly to Tonto City.

"There's an old sayin', Slim," said Danny. "Somethin' about fightin' the devil with fire. Anyway, it's worth tryin'."

"I'll do anythin' once, except eat tripe," replied Slim.

That night Jim Short sold the Lucky Hunch to Jack West for enough money to take him to California, too. West made out the bill-of-sale, which Short signed. The other five owners did not count in the deal, because they did not exist.

THE next morning three of West's men, with several pack-horses loaded with provisions, powder and tools, left for the Lucky Hunch.

There were no roads; so they were obliged to use pack animals.

They knew the location of Parke Neal's discovery, and that was their destination.

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Everything went well until they drew up at Parke Neal's camping place, where they met Danny, Slim, Frijole and Oscar, all armed with rifles.

"What's this all about?" asked the man in charge of the expedition.

"Was you figurin' on jumpin' this claim?" queried Danny.

"We ain't jumpin' anythin', cowboy. This property was bought from Jim Short last night; and we're workin' the claim for Jack West."

"Jim Short? How'd he come to own this—when we located and recorded it. We don't know Jim Short."

"You better find out 'bout him then," said the man. "This claim belongs to Jack West. Let's unload the animals, boys."

Danny's rifle clicked softly.

"Now, listen to me, young feller—" said their spokesman.

"I'm through listenin'," gritted Danny. "In this country, we shoot claim jumpers. I'm givin' yuh jist ten seconds to start yore caravan out of this country. Git ready, boys. One, two, three, four, five—"

"All right, we're goin'. But we'll be comin' back, with the law behind us; and don'tcha forgit that."

"Six, seven, eight—"

"They're goin'," chuckled Frijole. "How 'bout throwin' a little gravel into their boots, Danny?"

"Not unless they slow up a little, Frijole."

"Das is a good yoke," chuckled Oscar. "Ay'd like to ponch das smart faller in de yaw."

"Well, what's the next move?" asked Slim, grinning widely.

"Oh, I suppose we might as well visit the water-holes and see how things are goin' along. It's up to West to make the next move."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FARO DEALER.

THE three men and their pack-horses went straight back to Tonto City. Jack West was up at the Yellow Warrior, but a messenger soon brought him to town, where he learned from the men what had happened to them. West immediately sent for the sheriff, and told him.

"I want you to deputize several men," stated West. "Arm them well, accompany these three men back to that property, and see that they are safely started on their work."

"All right," replied the sheriff. "I don't reckon there's any question of ownership, Jack."

"No question at all."

"Yuh don't suppose them damn fools will start shootin', do yuh?"

"Are you afraid, Lou?" sneered West.

"No, I ain't scared. But I'd rather do it alone. If I take a lot of gunmen along, it'll prob'ly mean a battle. 'F I can show 'em where they're all wrong—"

"Give 'em a battle, damn 'em," snarled West. "I put you on this job, didn't I? Take enough men along to wipe 'em off the earth if they try to stop yuh."

"All right, Jack; I'll be ready in a little while."

But Lou James was not satisfied. His experiences with the J Bar C outfit had not been at all beneficial to his health. His eyes were still discolored from contact with Oscar Johnson's fists. Just to be sure of his legal rights, he went up to the recorder's office.

"I'd like to see the book yuh record mines in," he said.

The man gave him the book, and he made a search, after which he went

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down on the street, where several of his men had gathered with their horses. West crossed the street, and the sheriff met him.

"That Lucky Hunch mine ain't never been recorded, has it?" asked the sheriff cautiously.

"Recorded? Of course it has. You don't need to worry about that."

"When was it recorded?"

"Oh, I don't know the exact date," West rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "I believe it is next to the last record in the book."

"No," said the sheriff, "it ain't, Jack. The last one is the Golden Calf, and the next one to it is a group of claims up near Silver City."

"Yo're crazy, Lou! Why, I looked at it yesterday."

"Mebbe I am," agreed the sheriff, "but I don't think so. You better be sure about it before we declare war on the J Bar C."

"Come on, and I'll show yuh."

They went back to the office, and West examined the book. Cursing softly to himself, he sprung the book open wide, feeling deep into the binding. Then he closed the book with a bang and walked out of the office, with the mystified sheriff behind him. On the street, he went to the three men who had been at the prospect.

"Take that stuff back to the Yellow Warrior," he ordered. "The rest of you fellers can put up yore horses."

"But what does it mean, Jack?" asked the sheriff.

"Mean? Damn it! It means that I'm out two thousand cold dollars and them J Bar C crooks still own that property."

"Did yuh forgit to record it?"

"Yeah, I suppose that's as good a reason as any." And Jack West strode away, muttering to himself.

The sheriff turned back toward the courthouse, where he met the recorder, who said:

"I wanted to tell you something, but you went out so quick. Last night somebody broke the lock on my office door. But as far as I can discover, they haven't touched a thing."

"Nothin' in there to steal, is there?" asked the sheriff.

"Well, there isn't anything that could be used. We don't keep any money in there, of course."

"Well, I don't reckon there's anythin' to be done about it."

"IT is absolutely incredible and unlawful," declared Judge, as he and Henry sat on the ranch-house porch. "I hold no brief for the crook who destroyed our original record. It was damnable, sir. But for one of our—our own outfit to deliberately break a lock on the door of a public office, enter therein and feloniously remove one whole page from a book of records, I—well, sir, I haven't words to express my feelings on the matter."

Henry squinted through a glass of Frijole's Delight, cleared his throat softly and replied:

"With your limited vocabulary, Judge, I believe you have done very well with the subject. In fact, your legal outlook on life causes you, at times, to become more or less of an unmitigated ass. No doubt you have heard of fighting the devil with fire. That is what happened, and in this case the devil got singed to the extent of one gold mine."

"True enough, we retain ownership, Henry; but in such a way. We put ourselves on a par with sneak thieves."

"Really, Judge, you can not consider this as petty larceny. In fact, it was not a criminal act, except the

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breaking of the lock. We merely undid a crooked deal—and won back a million."

Judge lifted his glass, toying with it in his long fingers.

"At least," he said softly, "our consciences are clear, Henry. The guilt was neither mine nor yours, sir. It was done without our knowledge or sanction. I offer a toast to our purity of thought and deed."

"Then you will have to drink alone, Judge."

"Alone? Why, if I may ask, sir?"

"Because," smiled Henry, "it was I who suggested the scheme to Danny Regan."

"You?" Judge's eyes opened wide. "You suggested—"

"Ordered—if you like the word better, Judge."

"You—I—well, it—well, Henry, to you, sir; I didn't think you had that much sense."

"Drink hearty, Judge—to you, also, sir—and to the Golden Calf."

Danny and Slim rode in and unsaddled their horses. Both men carried shovels, which they stood against the corral fence, and came wearily to the house.

"They doped Moses' Well last night," said Danny, sinking down on the steps. "Two steers died before we got there, and another one was pretty sick. But we dug the whole thing out. The bottom was white with somethin'—arsenic, I reckon."

"Where is Oscar?" asked Henry.

"He insisted on goin' down to Antelope Springs. We took some lunch along, but didn't eat it; so he took it for his supper. Said he was goin' to stay there all night, and try and kill somebody early in the mornin'."

"Oscar," smiled Henry, "has the nocturnal habits of a duck hunter. He will be there, trying to get a shot at the early flight of poisoners. Danny, you and Slim get some glasses; this stuff is better than usual."

"Not me," replied Danny. "I'm crazy enough without drinkin' Frijole's prune whisky."

"I'll take a chance," said Slim. "The Pickins family has allus been noted for their ability to take punishment."

FRIJOLE came back from Tonto, where he had gone for provisions and the mail.

"I noticed that the parts of the stamp mill for the Smoke Tree mine has got as far as town," he told them. "Six big six-horse trucks, loaded down. They've got a well-drillin' rig, too."

"Nick Borden must mean business," said Judge. "I suppose we shall have to figure on a mill one of these days, Henry."

"The mills of the gods," sighed Henry. "They grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly small."

"I was not speaking of that kind of mill, Henry."

"That kind of a mill speaks for itself, Judge. I have been thinking of the cost of installing machinery and all that, in order to operate a mine. I believe our best move would be to sell it out, Judge."

"That's it," said Slim, wiping his lips. "A million apiece, Judge."

"Slim, can you conceive of a million dollars? Have you even the most remote idea of what it means?"

"Hell, no! But I could shore use it. I'd git me a new Stetson and a damn good ropin'-saddle and—"

"And wear clean socks every day—that belong to yuh," added Danny. "I don't mind yuh wearin' mine, Slim;

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but I wish you'd wash 'em before yuh put 'em back in my war-sack."

"A million," sighed Slim, "would shore be well treated by me."

"What would you do with a million, Frijole?" asked Henry.

"Daw-gone! Well, I'll tell yuh somethin'," replied Frijole. "I'd git me a boiled shirt, so damn slick that a fly couldn't git a foot-hold onto it, and I'd walk m'self into some saloons I know, and I'd say:

"'Feller, give me a short champagne.'"

"High-toned stuff, eh?" grinned Danny.

"Yo're danged right! And I'd throw a fourbit piece on the bar, and tell the barkeep to keep the change."

"I wonder what Oscar would do with a million," said Henry.

"That Swede!" snorted Slim. "Why, he'd hire the Army and Navy, and lick 'em, one at a time. What would you do with yore million, Henry?"

Henry smiled thoughtfully.

"Why, I hadn't given it a thought, until you gave me an idea. I believe I would back Oscar in his fights against the Army and the Navy. It would be as safe as any investment I know."

THERE were no customers at the faro game. Lola looked up as Jack West came in, with his foreman from the Yellow Warrior. They went straight back to the office. Several miners argued at the bar, but business in general was slow. Anyway, it was too early in the evening.

Lola got out of her chair and went slowly upstairs. Walking quietly down the hallway, she paused at her door. Opening the door slowly she stepped inside. She always kept a lamp burning on the table, turned low; but even in the faint rays from the lamp she saw a man sprawled on the floor in the center of the room.

Closing the door easily, she advanced toward the middle of the room. Suddenly the man twisted with the speed of a snake, and Lola was looking into the muzzle of a six-shooter. It was Tom Silver, his scarred face twisted with anger. Neither of them spoke. Slowly Tom Silver came to his feet, and a scuff of his foot swung the Navajo rug back into place.

"What's your game?" asked Lola.

"Why do yuh think I have any game?" he retorted, coming close.

Lola reached over and turned up the lamp.

"You knew about the crack in the floor, I see," she said.

"I found it when I cleaned up the blood of the man you killed," said Tom Silver. "I've been wonderin' why yuh killed him."

"I am very grateful for what you did that night," she said slowly. "I can never repay you for that."

"Did Doc Sargent catch you listenin'?" asked Silver.

"That is something we will not discuss."

"All right."

Tom Silver slowly pocketed his gun and came over beside the table.

"How well did you know Parke Neal?" he asked.

"Parke Neal?"

"Yes. How long have yuh known him?"

"Possibly six weeks before he was killed. I felt sorry for the poor devil, and grubstaked him."

Tom Silver nodded. "What is yore last name, Lola?"

"What is your name, Tom?" she countered, smiling.

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"I reckon that leaves us right where we was. Would yuh mind tellin' me how old yuh are?"

"What is your guess?"

"Twenty."

Lola laughed, but her lips tightened for a moment.

"It reminds me of a poem I heard once, something like this:

"She was old, so old, yet her years, all told,
Numbered a score and three,
But she knew by heart,
From finish to start,
The Book of Iniquity."

"Twenty-three, eh?" mused Silver. "The Book of Iniquity. But you don't know it, Lola; not at twenty-three. I've watched yuh. Men don't mean a thing to you. That's why men come to yore table. You treat 'em all alike. But look out for Jack West. He's crazy about you. Oh, he ain't the kind to make a fuss over a girl."

Lola laughed harshly. "You know a lot about Jack West, Tom. How long have you known him?"

Tom Silver shut his lips tightly, his eyes narrowed.

"I've only been here a short time," he replied.

"And yet you know Jack West so well. Perhaps you got all that information through a crack in the floor of this room."

"What I know, or don't know, is my business," he said coldly. "I helped you out of a nasty mess—remember that. I had to murder a man to save yore neck—and mine, too. We've got to be friends. What I do is my business, and the same with you. Sort of a silent partnership, Lola."

She held out her hand and they shook solemnly.

"You are the first man I have ever trusted, Tom," she said.

"A partnership of Cain," he said bitterly. "Mebbe I better go out first?"

"No," replied Lola. "I'll go down now. Put the rug back when you finish with it, Tom."

LOLA was back at the faro table when West and his mine foreman came from the office. They had a drink at the bar, and West sauntered over to Lola's game, where he sat down.

"I ain't had much chance to talk with you since Doc got killed," he told her. "Things have kept me on the jump. Yuh didn't find out anythin' from Doc—about those clippin's, did yuh?"

Lola shook her pretty head. West's hard eyes glinted with admiration as he looked at his biggest gambling attraction.

"Doc usually kept his mouth shut," said Lola.

"He was paid to keep it shut. Everybody who works for me gets paid for the same thing, Lola. I brought you something kinda nice, just to show my appreciation."

He fumbled awkwardly in his pocket and drew out a jeweler's plush-covered ring-box. Opening it carefully, he tumbled out a three-carat diamond solitaire, set in platinum.

"I didn't know the exact size," he said, "but we can have it made to fit."

Lola picked it up from the faro table and handed it back to him.

"I can't accept it," she said simply.

"Yuh can't? Why, I don't see—why can't yuh?"

"Why do you want to give me that valuable ring?" she asked.

"Well, I'll tell yuh, Lola—I—I appreciate yore work here."

"I am paid a good salary."

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"Oh, damn the salary! I mean by that—well, listen, Lola. Inside a year, I'll own all this valley. I'll be the biggest man in this State. There's nothin' yuh can't have. I'll buy yuh anythin'. What do I care if you've been a dance-hall singer, faro-dealer—damn it, yo're the prettiest woman in this country. What do yuh say?"

Lola looked straight at him, and her eyes were as hard as the sparkling bauble in his open hand.

"Your proposition doesn't interest me in the least," she replied.

"It don't, eh? Well, I'll—"

"Is the bank running this evening?" asked a voice behind them, and they turned to see the black-clad Nick Borden, his white teeth flashing in a wide smile. He saw the diamond ring in West's hand, and he chuckled softly.

"Tryin' to sell the family jewels, eh?" he said. "Nothing left, except honor. Too bad, too bad. Well, you're not the first man to bite off more than he could chew, West."

West got to his feet, flaming with wrath.

"Let me tell you somethin', Borden," he gritted.

"Please don't," replied Borden. "I never follow any man's advice; I only play hunches—my own."

Lola was laughing. West looked at her steadily for several moments, turned on his heel and went back to his office. Borden looked at Lola seriously.

"I saw the play," he told her. "Wasn't West tryin' to give you a diamond ring—or was it a proposal?"

"Is that any of your business?" she asked coldly.

Borden shrugged his shoulders and smiled at her.

"I was just a little curious," he explained, "because I've almost made up my mind to marry you myself."

"I suppose your mind is the only mind to make up."

"I was just fooling, my dear. I didn't want to play faro. Why, I wouldn't bet against one of Jack West's games if he'd let me deal the cards myself. I—well, I thought you was in an embarrassing position; so I horned in and busted it up. But you should have taken the diamond."

"I can handle my own affairs," she said stiffly.

"Yeah, I'll bet you can, Lola. But I wish you'd go in there and sing. I like you a lot better when you are singing. I like your eyes better, when they look less like a pair of smoky topazes."

"My eyes have nothing to do with you, Mr. Borden," she said.

"That is all you know about it," he retorted, and walked away.

JACK WEST was in a murderous mood when he went back to his office. He flung himself in his chair and took a big drink from his private bottle. Everything seemed to be breaking wrong for him. With all his wealth and his organization, he was being balked in the things he wanted to do. His foot scuffed a piece of paper on the floor and he glanced down.

It was a piece of ruled tablet paper, folded twice. He picked it up and unfolded it. On one side were penciled figures, as though someone had made out a bill. He held it closer to the lamp. The figures read:

To 1-3 of $1,000,000.00	$333,333.00
Interest for 20 years at 7 per cent	466,660.00
Total	$799,993.00

"One-third of a million dollars,"

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muttered West, puzzled over the large amount. "Interest for twenty years—twenty years—"

He lowered the paper to the desk, staring at the blank wall of the office. A million dollars! Twenty years' interest. West's face twisted bitterly. Parke Neal was dead—rotting in his grave on the side of the hill above town. There was only one answer. Slowly he tore the paper to bits and threw them in a cuspidor.

"They'll never collect a damn cent," he told himself. "But who put that paper on this office floor? Was that note, which was found in Doc Sargent's pocket, only an alibi for the scar-faced swamper?"

West got to his feet and walked to the door, but stopped, his right hand gripping tightly on the butt of the revolver in his pocket. Slowly he released the gun and went back to his desk, where he took another drink.

"I almost made a fool of myself," he muttered. "I've got to *know* things first."

He walked out into the saloon and went up to the bar. The scar-faced swamper was through for the night, and as he walked past the bar West spoke to him.

The man stopped.

"Is anybody usin' Doc Sargent's room now?" he asked.

"Not since Doc used it, Mr. West."

"All right; I'll sleep there tonight."

"It's all swamped up fine. I put clean beddin' on the next day."

West nodded, looking with narrow-lidded eyes at the back of the scar-faced man as he walked out.

"He's a queer lookin' jigger, Mr. West," observed the bartender. "But he minds his own business, and he shore does his work good."

"That's all yuh can ask of either a man or a horse," said West dryly.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

Explosions by Sea Air

A CURIOUS phenomenon is sometimes seen on the south coast of Wales, where the shoreline is rocky, full of fissures and caves. In a rising tide, air is usually trapped in the cracks and hollows. When the waves are big the air is pushed back, compressed, till it may finally blow out through the earth several hundred feet back from the cliffs.

—*Rutherford Robinson.*

A River of Ink

ONE of the freaks described by travelers in Algeria is a black river formed by the convergence of two streams, one from a region where the ground is full of iron salts, the other from a peat bog. Since peat is full of gallic acid, the mixture of the two makes ink.

—*George Dix.*

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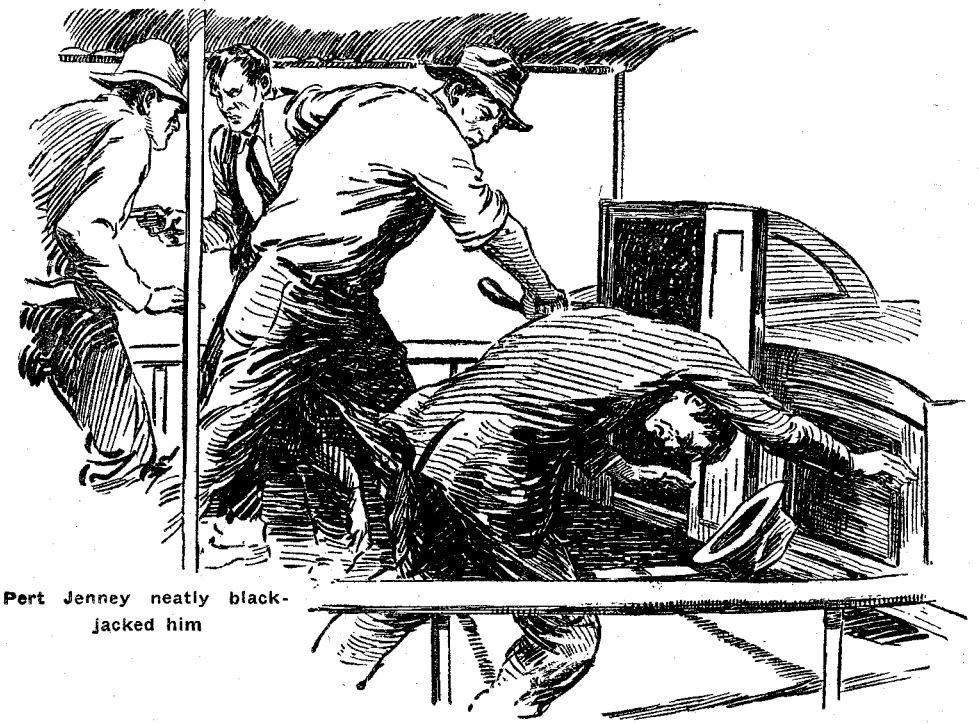

Pert Jenney neatly black-jacked him

Swamp Rat

By CHARLES T. JACKSON

No man could escape across those floating islands of the swamp—yet Sheriff Hollis and the Cajun had to find a way to cheat death

SHERIFF JIM HOLLIS felt the cut of leg irons about his swollen ankles as he dropped the last armful of palmettos on the white shell beach of the *chenière*, a tiny oak-grown islet lost in the cane jungles of the South Louisiana coast. Lereau, the Cajun swamp guide, averted his dark face from the captured officer as he wove the palmettos into a loose thatch; it would not do to be friendly, with Kid Pert Jenney sitting under the moss-hung oaks ten yards away.

Kid Pert's twisted mind did not let half an hour go by without a jeer at Sheriff Jim; this was good, working the Law in irons as the Law had worked him last spring.

"Keep movin', Hollis," Pert snarled. "I did thirty days in yore county gang in them same irons, but now yo're wearin' 'em for a thirty-stretch—if you last thirty. What next job fer him, Lereau?"

"Mangroves, *m'sieu'*," said the Cajun. "Small branches as for a duck blind. Come, I show yo'."

The prisoner clanked to the mangrove thickets. Hobbled, he could not pass over the snaky roots, but Lereau cut and tossed the limbs to him. Hollis heard the guide's whisper:

"Obey, m'sieu' sheriff. This Kid Pert is a dope, eh? It is yo' death not to obey orders."

The grim, tall sheriff carried his load to the beach. But it was no duck "blind" that he was making.

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Hardboiled Pert Jenney and his gun-toting partner, Baldy Vance, had hired Lereau up the Atchafalaya to guide them back to the deep swamp, but when their fast cabin cruiser had swerved to the Latanier bridge bank in the dusk two nights ago, and when Pert had whispered to the Cajun to call Sheriff Hollis down to the craft, then Lereau knew—too late!

It was just by chance that the sheriff had been idling on the bridge. He came aboard the boat casually, supposing that Lereau merely wanted to ask some question about the shooting season. Hollis had known Lereau slightly; he seemed to be just one of those shy, silent Cajun trappers from back of the "forty-arpent line," that historic demarkation which ran between the cultivated lands and the cypress swamps. The sheriff remembered vaguely that the deep swamp men had once offered Lereau as a candidate for a deputyship, but Hollis had appointed a river man instead.

With a friendly hail to Lereau at the wheel, the sheriff had swung under the aft awning of this strange boat. Then stars and village lights ashore had whirled to a blur for Sheriff Jim. Pert Jenney had neatly blackjacked him from behind. Baldy Vance had stuck a gun into Lereau's ribs and ordered him to send the boat swiftly down the dark Atchafalaya.

When Hollis came to, bound hand and foot in the cruiser's cabin, he reflected that not a soul in his county had seen him vanish. He heard Jenney bragging to Vance: "If it ain't a break, pickin' him up! Fightin' sheriff, they call him—well, he's through now, Baldy. And I still got the same irons he put on me fer the county road work when he said I was a bad actor. See?"

Baldy Vance grumbled; he was older, more cautious, but both of these Sabine outlaws were dangerous as cottonmouth snakes. The sheriff, looking at Baldy closely, decided that he was not one of the gang that had rushed the county road guards, some time earlier, and rescued Kid Pert—leg-irons and all—under a hail of machine gun slugs. It was on the occasion of that rescue that Kid Pert had yelled to the county guards that he would get the chief officer some day.

Well, the Kid's day had come—sooner than he could have hoped. The rôles were now reversed, and the fighting south coast sheriff was working for him in irons.

After a time, Kid Pert was tired of peering at his prisoner. Lereau ordered Hollis about with curt voice and somber eyes; but if the Cajun had any grudge because Hollis had once turned him down for a deputyship he made no sign. He had guided the cabin cruiser into the pathless *roseau* cane swamps, moored it by a light head anchor and a stern line, just off the narrow shell beach of the oak-scrub islet, and listened to Pert Jenney's instructions.

Could the prisoner escape from the little *chenière?* Lereau shrugged: "No man crosses the *isles, flottantes, m'sieu'*. With chains on him or not. One can neither walk nor swim. Deputies and hounds have trailed men through the flooded cypress, but at the edge of the cane, they stop. It is death beyond."

SHERIFF JIM knew that well. From the low ridge of the *chenière*—not sixty feet wide and some three hundred long—he saw a sea of cane billows stretch north, west, south. The cypress woods a dim blur northward, the Mexican Gulf invisible to the south, and on the eastern side of the islet was a shallow tidal bayou by which the boat had entered. Across this began the illimitable cane, and beneath it everywhere, the bottomless ooze. No man could cross the floating prairies; at high tides the swamp trappers shoved their tiny pirogues through with poles.

Then the dreaded water hyacinths, "lilies," as the swamp folk called them. Here they were now in the upper end of this bayou, a solid wall of glittering green, topped with purple spikes, the curse and glory of the Gulf lands. Up in the cypress lakes Hollis had seen tow steamers imprisoned for days by a shift of wind that brought the lilies in. The government boats sprayed the flowers with oil and live

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steam trying to keep some channels open to navigation, but the native craft did not fight the lilies when tide and wind started them down the bayous. Lereau had made these two outlaws realize that.

Baldy Vance joined the thin-faced nervous Jenney who was waggling his gun at Hollis when the long day's work ended. Baldy was an Oklahoman who didn't know the swamps. He didn't see the reason for making that palmetto thatch which Lereau and Hollis had now dragged over the shining brasswork and the white paint of the little cruiser.

"The Cajun says," grunted Kid Pert, "that them damn lilies are riding to sea down the passes east, and while we hole up here a Coast Guard plane might spot the outfit and wonder about it. Lereau ought to know."

Sheriff Jim heard that. And wondered. No Coast Guard plane would cross in here, miles from the Gulf, and if it spotted a smart city craft worked in where the best duck shooting was, there was nothing to worry about. So Lereau told Pert that?

Pert yelled at the Cajun: "All right fer today. Git to the cookin', and I'll put this guy into the bullpen."

That was another of Kid Pert's jokes. The "bullpen" was nothing but a thatch under the moss-hung oaks where the prisoner slept—always in his irons. Lereau slept ashore where he wished.

Baldy and Pert bunked in the screened boat cabin, safe from mosquitoes or night damp. They took the axe, the cooking pots, even Lereau's jackknife with them at nights; but the guide merely smiled. He could not free Hollis from those irons, and if he had the prisoner could not leave the *chenière*.

The two gunmen kept a small alert terrier loose in the cockpit of the boat, and no one could have boarded it without alarm. But Jenney was nervous; the great sunny silence of the swamps made a "dope" jumpy; he was suspicious of the guide's advice, but he knew even a Cajun could not leave the *chenière* without a boat.

Hollis, in his wet clothes, stretched on the shells under the thatch, waiting for Lereau to bring the grits and bacon after Baldy and Pert had eaten. When the swamper did appear his foot seemed dragging slightly. Hollis saw him push along a coil of rusty bail wire such as the moss-pickers use when they load their dugouts to paddle the stuff out to the trade channels toward the Mississippi. A tangled coil of wire lost here from some other season. Lereau said nothing, squatted by the prisoner and set the food pot down.

"The wind shifts, M'sieu' Sheriff. A norther is due and a full moon tide. The lily will go out of the bayous to sea."

"Nothin' to me," grunted Hollis curtly. "See here, you—"

"The last 'gator has holed in the mud. The fiddler crabs are not on the shells. The moccasins have left the ridge. It will be colder—a norther, ma frien'."

THE chained man looked at him quickly. Lereau's brown face was turned to the outlaws by the fire as his lips moved.

"When there is nothing more to be done and these men leave here, then death comes to yo', *m'sieu'*."

Hollis nodded. It was no news to him. When Kid Pert was through playing with the prisoner as a cat does a mouse, he would kill. But now Hollis saw more; Lereau had proposed building this palmetto camouflage for the boat, he had warned the outlaws against trying to cross the lily drift in the tidal bayous, in order to keep the prisoner alive that much longer. Lereau could do no more; he himself was a prisoner of the swamp.

Hollis looked steadily at the Cajun who shivered in the rising bite of the norther. "And what about you, Lereau? You fool enough to think they will let you escape?"

The swamp man shrugged. "They will need me to cross the lower bays to the Mississippi Passes. After that—" he shrugged again and glanced to the barrier of hyacinths choking the upper end of the channel. Worlds of flowers, the purple spikes high as a man's head, their

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snaky roots five feet below water trailing the abysmal mire. There was a solid mile of them beyond the *chenière*, and something held them at the point or they would fill this channel where the hidden boat was moored.

Pert Jenney yelled at Lereau to put out the fire. The two armed men hauled in the stern line and climbed aboard the boat which then swung at the light anchor, five yards off the beach. Hollis saw the light go on in the cabin. When he looked for Lereau again the guide had vanished. A yellow moon was rising over the cane prairie, the oak and mangrove scrub rattled in the cold wind. A Texas norther, the first break in the autumn calms. The southeast Gulf breezes had piled the swamps full of water; tomorrow it would be going seaward, a big wind tide.

Then suddenly Hollis saw Lereau standing right by the rustling thatch. The guide was shining with mud and water, he breathed hard while he shivered. When the prisoner's leg irons clanked Lereau raised a warning hand. But Hollis muttered.

"You disappeared at the north end of this island where the lilies are jammed. You come from the south end now. You tried to swim the channel and couldn't make it. I thought a swamp Cajun'd have more sense."

"Do not talk," said Lereau. "I am tired, *m'sieu'*." Then, as the chained man muttered sullenly, he went on: "No one can cross the *isles flottantes*. But the swamp is my frien'—and no frien' of men who do not know it. At a full moon tide yo' and I may go—with the lilies. Now, say nothing. That little dog hears every stir on the beach."

Hollis said no more; this talk was incomprehensible to him. But he knew that the thin-clad Cajun trembled with cold for an hour. The moon was high and white when Hollis felt him grasp his leg chain. Lereau was wrapping his wet denim jacket about it.

"Hold the slack tight, so it does not rattle. Follow me. Tomorrow we are dead men in the sea or dead men here. Quiet, *m'sieu'*."

THE sheriff crept awkwardly through the oak scrub. The wind clinked the coquina shells on the beach and the dog barked when the two fugitives had to cross the ridge. But they came to the north end of the islet, parted the thickets and looked out upon the endless creaking field of floating hyacinths.

Lereau squatted on the shells, his hand under the nearest leaves, and now Hollis saw why the flower blockade was held. There was a sodden logboom across the narrow channel.

The swamper looked up at him knowingly: "Understood?"

"This much," retorted the sheriff; "this is one of the booms which the lumbermen use up in the big cypress to keep the lilies out of their canals. It went adrift some time or other and lodged on this point. Three logs chained end to end, but what holds them here now?"

Lereau laughed slightly even as his teeth chattered: "I did, the night before last when I felt the norther coming. With some pieces of wire to the mangrove roots, ma frien'. Now we wait till the wind tide runs stronger, and loosen the boom, eh?"

Hollis felt the strain of the floating flower islands upon the log end when he touched it. "Yes, I get you now. You think you might ride that boom down the channel. You're crazy, man. This big ebb tide will take all this stuff to sea, and you with it."

"It is a chance," said the swamp man. "To sea with the lilies or yo' die here, *m'sieu'*. Pert Jenny will not allow yo' thirty days. It is his joke—with death at the end."

The sheriff considered silently. So this slight, brown man had been figuring all this. He had held the outlaws here promising them to go with an ebb tide across all the bays—Caminada, Barataria, Grand Terre Island to the Mississippi Passes. Now the swamp water was going out before the norther, and Lereau had no further ex-

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cuse for the delays that had kept Hollis living.

"So you think, with these leg irons, I could hang to a rotten log and cross the big bay with a sea runnin' high. Well, then, let's take the chance. But that'll be all."

Lereau was feeling his twists of wire still holding the sodden log-boom against pressure of wind and tide upon the great hyacinth field behind it. "But there is more," he smiled. "See what happens next."

"Next—" muttered the sheriff, "won't be much. When these thugs find us gone they'll follow the lily drift tomorrow and we'll be like two wet muskrats sittin' on a log. Easy shootin'."

"Our frien's may be su'prised," Lereau added. "The swamp doesn't like men such as they are. The lilies are to be considered."

Hollis made nothing of that. Lereau was out on the half-sunken logs, crossing the muddy channel. He had returned to the *chenière* beach when Hollis noticed that the far end of the boom was moving. Opening like a gate on a hinge at their feet, and the van of the lily horde was coming through the gap. Then more—great islets of spiked flowers were free. Presently they filled the channel, riding before the wind toward the lightless boat.

Then the chained man knew. Lereau had loosened a packed mile of floating gardens upon the sleeping gunmen. The bay below would be a tossing Sargasso Sea tomorrow; no boat could fight through the *isles flottantes*.

The swamper touched the sheriff's arm. "We go now. I cut this end of the boom free. Hang to the log, your arms over it and pray *le bon Dieu* for luck!"

HOLLIS floundered among the flowers, held to the log, his chained legs trailed as best he could. Lereau by his side but trying to peer above the tossing tops. Then the terrier upon the boat barked alarm. Baldy's heavy voice cursed him, then called to Pert Jenney. There had come a slight soft crash upon the bow, the light anchor drifting in the mud. Pert Jenney, always nervous as a cat, came to the cockpit. Then he yelled incredulously. There was no open water! The mighty clutch of the floating islands was upon the boat. The Sabine coast outlaw whirled to the engine pit. He knew the trap.

The Oklahoma man had never seen anything like it. Jenney raved at him. "That damn prairie is comin' down on us, Baldy! Get the motor goin'. We got to run ahead o' the stuff!"

"Them two fellers on the island," retorted Vance. "You better not leave 'em to squawk about us when they get away."

"To hell wit' 'em. We got to get ahead o' the lilies and come back tomorrow when the channel's clear, and put slugs in 'em—but not now. Once this boat is blocked in an acre o' this mess with a change o' wind she's trapped, mebbe a week—mebbe a month!"

He tore at the useless wheel. Vance started the motor. It broke to racing and when he shot in the gear a heavy pounding followed; the boat quivered with mad strains upon the shaft. Jenney shoved Vance from the clutch; he reversed, went ahead—nothing happened but that grinding, rending roar. And always the ruthless lilies closed in on the boat, bearing it on. The great purple spikes whipped in the wind over the rail; the glossy leaves glittered in the moonlight as far now as a man could see where the bayou broadened to the shallow bay.

Hollis lifted his chin from the log: "Lereau, why can't that boat start? You've been at some trick."

The brown man's teeth chattered as he smiled. "Last night, as you know, I swim the bayou, from clump to clump of the lilies, as a muskrat, *hein?* I arrive under the stern of the boat and with the rusty wire I picked up on the *chenière*, bound the propeller to the skag. Even when it breaks the rudder is also lashed. It will take some time, I remark, to free the tangle, and meantime—"

Lereau shrugged. Hollis watched the

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Cajun steadily. "That pass to the Gulf will be kickin' white with this norther, and then what?"

"If the logs continue to float we live," said Lereau. "It may be we will drift to the reefs somewhere. If not"—he shrugged his thin shoulders again—"if not, then death comes—name of the devil—yes! But now you live, eh? In chains, but you live, eh?"

Hollis smiled grimly. "We got a chance—till daylight. Then Pert Jenney will spot us and with his high-powered rifle—well, you said it—two wet muskrats on a log, but muskrats can dive."

Lereau looked along the log. They could see nothing now, for the broad waxy leaves creaked musically over the slimy log as a slow swell began to lift the lily field. But they could hear tumult on the cabin boat. Kid Pert was wild; he swore at sea and sky and land, but mainly the floating islets. Once a wicked little wave raced in upon the log-boom, shoved the stuff away, and Hollis saw a patch of open water. Beyond it the white cruiser drifting broadside in an acre patch of hyacinths. He saw Vance and Jenney on the stern, talking subduedly now.

THE gunmen could see rough open water southward in a mile wide pass, and the white curl of surf on sand reefs beyond. From numberless swamp bayous the wind tide was at full ebb and bearing the lilies with it. But now there was open water for a moment about the stern. Kid Pert stared at it. It was odd about that motor! Suddenly he swung over the low rail, yelling at Baldy. Pert hung low and peered and felt about.

"He will discover the trick, *m'sieu'*," said Lereau. "But by the time he frees the screw, we will be in the deep pass. Ninety feet deep and very swift now! I hope we drift to a reef before we are discovered. It will be bad, M'sieu' Sheriff."

"Better than bein' buzzard meat back on the *chenière*."

The Cajun laughed slightly; he was liking the sheriff better. To the shy, silent people of the deep swamp, any man who lived beyond the "forty-arpent line" was a Yankee and one to be regarded with suspicion, but Hollis had grinned with him at danger.

Lereau was watching his companion in a new light when Kid Pert began howling from under the overhanging stern.

"That damned swamp rat has wired up the shaft, Baldy! I bet he cut loose that lily jam on us, too, to drift us away from the *chenière*."

"I warned you," grumbled Vance, "but you was bound to devil the sheriff till the last minute afore we left. Now Lereau's throwed in with him."

"Git me the pliers, and pole the stuff away from the stern," shouted Jenney. "I'll twist his wires off and when the lilies quit runnin' we'll head back and pump slugs in them guys."

"Yeah?" snarled Vance, "we better shove on to Southwest Pass and up to New Orleans, as we started before you listened to that Cajun's advice. A Coast Guard will heave in on us to see if we're in trouble, and then what? A forty-thousand dollar stake aboard us from the bank job, hey? Thirty years for you, Kid, instead o' thirty days fer yore sheriff! You got the answer?"

Kid Pert was half under water, hanging to the rudder post and trying to twist the tough wire. The waves rode him and he spluttered, but he wanted no talk from a man from the dry ranges of the Panhandle.

"Yeah, I got the answer," he yelled. "Go back and put those two away. Hollis is cold meat fer me first."

Lereau glanced at Hollis: "You heard? *Le bon Dieu!* They stuck up the Latanier bank! I thought so—me!"

He felt the sheriff's chained legs tense by his side. Hollis eyed him savagely: "What's this? A bank stickup—and you knew about it? Why in hell didn't you tell me?"

Lereau's blue lips twisted. "Of what use? I was not sure, and you could do nothing. All I knew was what I suspected from overhearing their talk on the boat.

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These men hired me, *m'sieu'*, twenty miles from Latanier where they left their car in the brush. Their boat was waiting. Certainly, I thought them city men wishing to hunt in the lower swamp. Not until Jenney saw you on the bridge and told me to summon you on board did I see wrong. Then, too late! They slugged you and compelled me to steer the boat east from the Atchafalaya to the *chenière*. To a good hiding place as I see now! On the *chenière* they hardly concealed from me that they had robbed the bank. That was why I knew both you and I would be killed when they no longer needed me. But first I must find them a clear passage to the Mississippi. After that"—Lereau shrugged—"I would follow you to death without doubt. But if I had told you this in camp you are not one who could have concealed that you knew of the bank robbery—no, not you, M'sieu' Sheriff!"

THE fighting sheriff of the bayou country listened absently. He felt he was the Law now and not a chained prisoner. He looked through the screening flowers to the drifting white boat. For the first time he felt like taking command; that he should give orders to this Cajun and not take them. Still there was nothing he could do. He grumbled slowly to the other man.

"Well, you should have told me. I might have done something—"

"Nothing! It would have been your death instantly!"

"Well, here we are—like two muskrats on a log, as you said. Waiting to be shot—"

Lereau grimaced helplessly. Somehow he felt to blame if those two bandits did not face the Law. And a fatal dawn was now rosy across the stormy east bay. The lily field had broken to numberless islets tossing in deep pass water. Waves swept the log-boom, taking away the last screening plants. If Baldy Vance looked off to starboard forty yards he would have seen the two fugitives easily. But Kid Pert was cursing Baldy.

The Oklahoma man was lying outstretched on the tiny stern deck, his head under the rail, holding to a rope which Pert was trying to make into a looped seat. He needed both hands to work at the wires about the submerged propeller. The waves battered him, and the bruised hyacinths massed on his arms. The boat rolled and Pert's head vanished. When he got it above water he swore at Vance, and Baldy snarled back impatiently.

Lereau touched the sheriff's arm. "I think of something. We must capture the boat or we are dead men."

"You're crazy. They'll shoot on sight—"

"You say I am the swamp muskrat, eh? Well, then, like the rat I go crawling from one floating islet to the next. The current takes me to the boat—it is a chance, *m'sieu'*."

The sheriff gaped silently as the Cajun dropped away from the log-boom. He vanished behind a flower clump, then his wet head appeared by another, like a swimming rat indeed. The white terrier saw him and broke to furious clamor. The brute dashed along the lee rail, howling challenge.

Hollis shook his head dismally. The swift current must have taken the swamper past the bow, fighting helplessly against the hyacinth drift.

"If Baldy Vance looks around from the stern of that boat," muttered Sheriff Jim, "he'll see this fellow, and shoot."

Hollis twisted his numb, chained legs and stared. Lereau was in sight now, leaving the last floating lily clump to stroke softly for the bow of the boat. He vanished again. Baldy Vance was listening to Pert's curses. The Sabine gunman was having heavy weather under the stern; Baldy didn't hold the rope loop right so that Pert could use both hands at the job. Pert swore at sea and sky and flowers, but mostly at all swamp Cajuns.

Then Hollis heard the dog, saw him racing over the cabin roof to meet Lereau who came over the bow dripping. These fellows shouldn't have left the anchor line dangling for him to climb. The Cajun kicked the yapping terrier aside, dropped

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over to the cockpit and turned into the cabin. Then Baldy Vance did look about. And what he saw was a wet man by the wheel, bringing up the muzzle of an automatic rifle.

"Pert!" Baldy yelled. "Yore muskrat man is aboard! Drop that gun, swamper!"

FOR a big man Baldy acted with amazing speed. Lereau had come too close, and Vance's humped back struck the rifle as he came up. The dog was tearing at Lereau's leg for one thing, so he had to lunge aside and grab its hindquarters. Vance was swinging a mighty right when Lereau hurled the writhing terrier full in his face. Then the Cajun straightened and pulled the trigger. Bullets streamed past Baldy's knees, and the Oklahoma man stumbled back to where Kid Pert Jenney's thin face appeared above the stern rail.

"All right," Jenney scowled. "You been hid aboard, Lereau? Stickup, hey?"

"Yo' two will lie down on the little deck," said Lereau.

Jenney's pale, savage eyes flickered. "All right," he repeated. I know what you want. A thousand berries to lay off this rough stuff, Lereau."

"Yo' two lie out on yo' bellies," said Lereau, "a good position — do not change it."

Vance obeyed. To Pert he said: "Make it two grand—you can't laugh this off."

Pert's lips were blue with the cold. He crawled down by his pal, jerking from the side of his mouth. "Five grand to get us east'ard to the river; and you hold the gun all the way, see?"

Lereau was holding the gun and laughing. But with one hand he tossed the light headrope out to the drifting boom log.

"Come aboard, if you can, M'sieu Sheriff. Do not fear our frien's. They are busy. So is the dog, but foolishly also."

Hollis dragged himself aboard with some difficulty. The two men aft on the tiny deck didn't believe it till the sheriff stood up in his chains. Vance grunted.

"I tell the next one, Pert—you ain't buyin' yore way past this hick either. He remembers he's wearin' yore irons."

But Pert was howling curses at the Cajun. "You got aboard somehow and knowed where the guns was kept. So you'll know the rest, you damn swamp rat!"

Lereau held the rifle to the sheriff. Then he began to uncoil some of that useful, rusted moss baling wire from his middle. He crossed Baldy's feet and bound them. Then his wrists. When he came to Pert Jenney, Pert jerked his head around.

"Listen—five thousand to each—"

The Cajun swung his wire across Pert's mouth. It left a wide white mark.

"When I discover that old wire on the *chenière*," he said, "I remark to myself this will be useful, when I am allowed to keep not even my knife nor a cookpot. Now I think, M'sieu Sheriff, if you laid this wire swiftly across our frien's face once or twice he would tell you where the keys are to those leg-irons you wear. If he has not key a file will release you."

He stood over Kid Pert Jenney with the wire raised as a whip. Kid Pert snarled.

"To hell with you. You knew where the guns were kept on this boat so you know the rest. The key's in the left hand locker, you damn swamp rat!"

Lereau turned below into the narrow galley. Hollis sat down by the wheel and gave it a turn. "Well, you got that wire off, Jenney, so I reckon the swamp rat can put the boat about and head for the Atchafalaya. Up there it won't be long now. While Lereau runs it, I'll rummage out that forty thousand bank loot you mentioned as aboard. How about it, Kid, hey? And these irons back on your shanks—want to hear 'em jingle, Kid? A thirty-year stretch, that's about how I figger you."

Kid Pert Jenney scowled in silence. as Lereau came up to unlock the irons from Sheriff Hollis.

"Lereau! Yo're first deputy now, back of the 'forty-arpent line'! So I give you first orders—put them irons on Jenney, then hustle some Cajun coffee for you an' me, an' have it strong!"

THE END

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Strange Brethren

By WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE
Author of "Mountain Murder," "The Wolf of Quebec," etc.

It was Devil Baldwin against the "Three Black Lombards" in that Lake Champlain iron masters' war, with no quarter asked or given

CHAPTER I.

DELAYED JUSTICE.

A TALL young man on a tall black horse grew rigid with anger. His jaw muscles stood out in lumps and the knuckles of his clenched bridle hand turned white. In spite of a threadbare tailed coat and hat from which the nap was beginning to wear he held himself as

Her hands tore viciously at the whip

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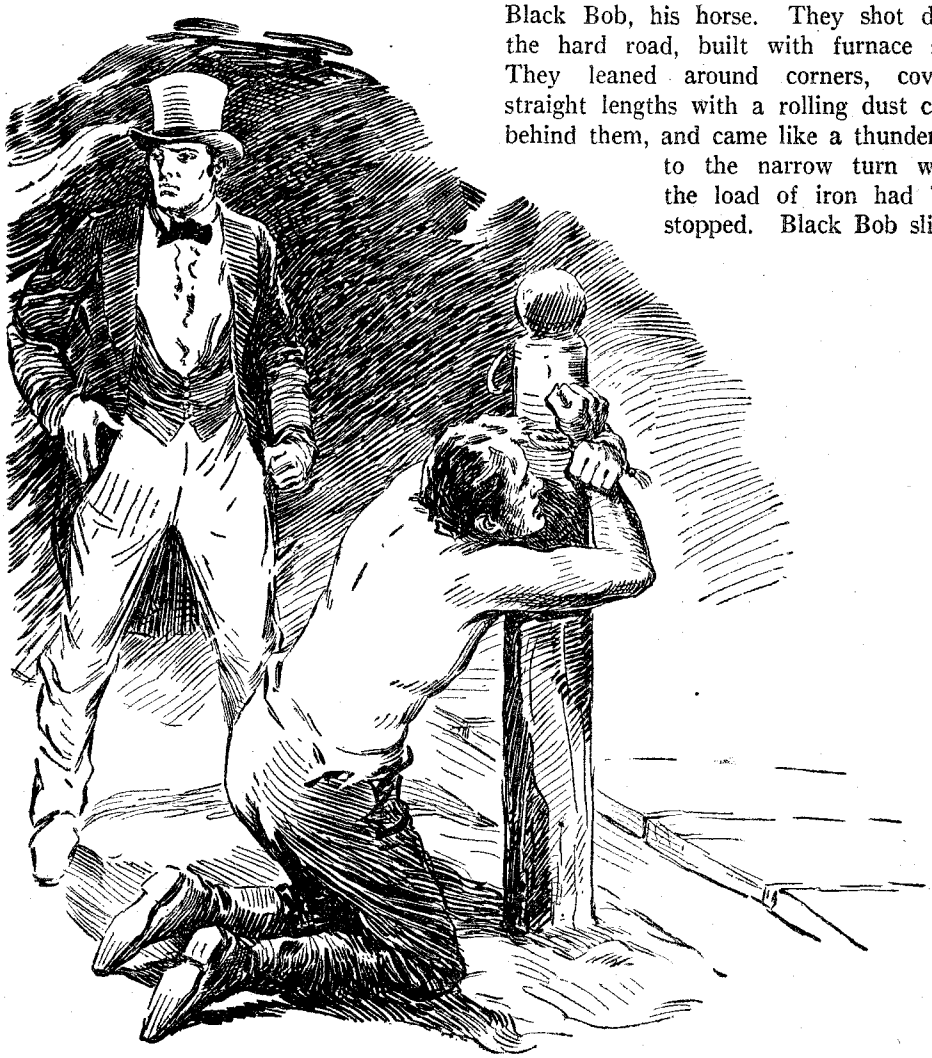
Novelette—Complete

though he were lord of mountain and forest, and the blue waters of Lake Champlain. There was not, in 1840, a more proudly carried head in the Adirondack country than that of Roger Baldwin, iron master.

Now the very devil was dancing in the steel blue of his gaze as he looked down from a hilltop over a long stretch of narrow road that wound toward the lake. For his quick eye had picked up three horsemen hiding in the roadside brush. And one of his teams was going slowly toward that ambush, drawing a box wagon loaded with billets of iron from his forge for shipment by barge to the cities.

Baldwin was fighting with a Catalan forge of one fire against other iron makers up and down the Raven River who, with three and five fires and double and triple his number of men, could not turn out the fine quality of iron that he sent to the foundries of Troy and New York and Philadelphia. Now the Lombard Brothers, his chief enemies among the iron masters, were going to try violence. He had hoped for that, because he loved a fight almost as much as he loved iron.

Baldwin's heels touched the flanks of Black Bob, his horse. They shot down the hard road, built with furnace slag. They leaned around corners, covered straight lengths with a rolling dust cloud behind them, and came like a thunderbolt to the narrow turn where the load of iron had been stopped. Black Bob slid to



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a halt beside the high wagon box and for an instant, before things began to happen, Baldwin saw a picture that roused him to such burning fury as he had never known before.

The teamster, one Baptiste Frechette, lay stretched with outflung arms upon the gray-black billets of iron. Blood from the man's beaten face stained his butternut shirt and one of his arms was twisted strangely. Three burly fellows in the round black hats of workmen were slashing at the heavy and expensive harness of the horses, which snorted and pawed at the touch of strange hands.

The men's brown faces turned in astonishment when they saw who had found them at their work.

"Devil Baldwin!" cried one of them, but he did not speak again.

Baldwin reined Black Bob up and the horse struck with his forefeet. Steel caulks drove into the man's chest. The gray team on the wagon plunged and kicked. Baldwin reached the second man and with the weight of his horse and his swinging body behind it, drove out his fist. The man's nose was flattened against his face. He whirled around, screaming, and ran. The third ruffian tried to mount. Black Bob smashed against the horse with his shoulder and at the same time Baldwin hooked an arm as hard as his own iron around the man's neck and lifted him, choking, into the air.

BALDWIN held his prisoner thus until his struggles grew less. Then he dropped him to the ground, and the man stayed there in a coughing heap. The iron master looked around. The horses of the raiders had taken themselves off in a panic. The man whom Black Bob had struck was still unconscious; the third one was nowhere in sight. Baldwin spoke to the grays on the wagon, ran his hand along the neck of one of them, and then turned to the teamster.

As tenderly as Frechette's mother could have done it he lifted the man's head in the crook of his arm and wiped away the blood. Fresh crimson oozed from the cuts left by half a dozen wanton blows. Frechette's arm was broken, and with malice. They had not needed to do this to Baptiste Frechette in order to stop that load of iron. They had been instructed to lose a man for Roger Baldwin.

Baldwin took a wicker covered flask from a saddle pocket and turned brandy down the teamster's throat. Frechette's head moved, his eyes opened wildly and he tried to rise; only to fall back with a groan of pain.

"Mist' Baldwin!" he cried. "My arm? Is she broke?"

"I'm afraid so, Baptiste."

The man's mouth worked; tears welled up into his stricken eyes.

"*Mes enfants!*" he exclaimed, with a sob in his throat. "My young 'un is starve for sure now! And my wife, she will have anodder—"

"They won't starve, Baptiste," said Baldwin, quietly. "I'm going to take you to Bessboro to the doctor now, and you may trade on your book at my store until you're able to work again."

"I can't never pay you those debt, Mist' Baldwin!" the man muttered. "I can't pay him up!"

Roger Baldwin drew a long breath. It was hard to explain. For in that day, when a workman ceased to work, his pay stopped.

Unless he had the good fortune, like Baptiste Frechette, to be in the service of a man whose ancestors had given him something of feudal loyalty.

"I take care of my men!" barked Baldwin in a harsh voice. "You were hurt working for me! It will be the same as though you were to work every day from now until you are well! You will owe me nothing! Do you understand that, Baptiste?"

A slow, half credulous grin drew Frechette's lips back from his ragged teeth. He wore the look of one who beholds a Celestial vision.

"*Bon Dieu!*" he whispered. "I bet, Mist' Baldwin, I bet me you don't have to

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stay in Purgatory more as ten minutes when you die!"

Roger Baldwin climbed from the wagon.

"You're wrong, Baptiste," he said through clenched teeth. "What I'm going to do now will set me back ten years in Purgatory, if there is any such place!"

The man whom Baldwin had choked was on his feet, holding to a wagon wheel. His face had changed from purple back to normal red-brown, but he still fingered his throat and looked at Roger Baldwin with the eyes of a cornered animal. He was as tall as Baldwin, and broader, and he must have outweighed him by fifty pounds. But the hand of fear was laid heavily upon his tousled head and he cringed.

"Who sent you to do this?" demanded Baldwin.

The man's mouth opened but no sound came.

"Was it the Black Lombards? Hugh and Dane and the canny Hendrick?"

The man nodded, and breathed an affirmative.

"What's your name?"

"Bart Gorman."

"I know you, Gorman," said Baldwin. "You're one of the Lombard hammermen and the Lombards want to stop me from shipping iron. When you see them again tell them that this time I've taken two men for one. The next time it will be three, and the next time five. That fellow by the roadside has a rib or two broken and in a minute more you'll have a broken arm!"

BALDWIN made a swift movement with his left hand and then his right came up from the level of his waist and cracked against Gorman's jaw. The man rose on his toes, grasping wildly at the air. He fell where he stood and lay huddled against the wheel. Baldwin pulled one of his thick arms between the spokes and leaned backward for the jerk that would snap the bones. But he remained motionless, held by a voice that had come rumbling melodiously out of the dense undergrowth at the roadside.

"*Do good to them that despitefully use you!*"

A majestic figure of a man whose white hair rolled down to his shoulders and whose beard spread over a mighty chest stepped out of the bushes. His blue jeans were held up by a fragment of rope. His shirt was a garment of patches. But neither these garments nor the big bare feet in the dust of the road could make him ridiculous. For the eyes which were sheltered under overhanging brows were wells of power. They gave the peculiar impression of penetrating and splitting asunder until they reached the inner nature of what they saw.

"Hello, Zeb!" greeted Baldwin, but his jaws tightened. "You are about to witness the execution of Biblical justice. Doesn't your religion demand an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth?"

"No!" thundered the old man. "'This is my commandment, that ye love one another!'"

Devil Baldwin laughed, and the sound was not pleasant. Ordinarily no one paid any attention to old Zeb Potter except to give him a meal if he asked for it, or shelter in a storm.

Everyone up and down the York state side of Lake Champlain understood that he was harmless.

"This man helped break an arm for my teamster," said Baldwin. "And now I am going to send him back to the Black Lombards with a broken arm!"

Baldwin set his shoulders and started to snap his body backward. Before the movement could be made he was lifted bodily into the air. A pair of arms like the trunks of young trees circled him and pinioned his own arms to his sides. The voice of Zeb Potter spoke in his ear.

"My son, it is more worthy of a Baldwin to take your teamster to a surgeon!"

"Damn you!" cried Baldwin as he tore himself free. He stood panting, staring down at the man in the road.

After all, there was something in the code about not striking a fallen enemy. He shrugged and set about patching up the slashed harness of the team.

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"Wars are not won your way, Zeb!" he said.

CHAPTER II.

THREE TO ONE

ROGER BALDWIN drove the load of iron and the sturdy grays into Bessboro, with Baptiste stretched out on horse blankets laid over the billets of iron, full of hope and brandy and very happy in spite of his broken arm. Black Bob walked sedately beside the load, entering into the spirit of the occasion as fully as he had into the fight.

It was an unusual sight to see an iron master driving one of his own teams, and Baldwin's appearance brought men from tavern and store to the wooden sidewalks of the busy little town. They stared at the erect, grim faced figure handling the grays and also at that other form on top of the load from which now came a *chanson* of Canada.

Baldwin left Frechette at the doctor's office, sent for the harness maker to make repairs, and hired another teamster to take Frechette's place. Then he went with a long, swift stride to the tavern that was called The Boatman's Rest, where justice of the peace Joel Slaven had his office and held court.

Baldwin entered the tap room with a sweeping glance that covered every yard of the room from the corner where Squire Slaven sat behind a deal table covered with green baize to the bar and the greasy features of the proprietor. He had expected trouble here and when he saw the three black-haired Lombards with mugs of hot rum in their hands he knew that trouble was certain.

The Lombards, Dane, Hendrick, and Hugh, were cast in the same mould that had shaped their father before them. They were of no more than medium height in a country of tall men, but their powerful, sloping shoulders topped thick bodies, and not one of them was fat. They were built like the granite boulders of the mountains and it was said that any one of them could handle the toughest man in their forge at Lombardsville.

They differed more in disposition than in body: Hugh was somewhat slow to anger and stronger than either of the others, Dane had a rough and fiery temper, and Hendrick was the plotter for the three. Baldwin knew that they were here this day for a purpose and that the purpose had to do with him.

With the eyes of every man in the hushed tap room upon him, Baldwin walked over to the justice, who looked up with the face of a rabbit suddenly gone vicious. He patted the snuff-stained ruffles of his shirt. He sneered, but his speech was polite enough, for men were a little careful what tone they took with Devil Baldwin.

"Well, sir, Mr. Baldwin!" he exclaimed. "What can I do for you today?"

"I want a warrant for one Bart Gorman, and two others whose names I do not know, charging assault and malicious destruction of property. You will know better than I how to word it. These three men set on one of my teamsters today, broke his arm, and were cutting up my harness when I found them."

THERE followed a moment of profound silence. Roger Baldwin knew that he was making a gesture that might be utterly futile, for in the Adirondack wilderness of 1840 the hand of the law was none too strong. But he wished to make this gesture publicly before he took matters into his own hands.

"Ahem!" coughed the justice.

As though at a signal the Lombard brothers strode over to the table of Squire Slaven, shoulder to shoulder. From some corner suddenly appeared the workman whose nose Baldwin had smashed, with a broad bandage covering his face between eyes and mouth. The Lombards ranged themselves silently beside Slaven and Hendrick Lombard thrust his workman forward.

"This man's complaint comes first," he said. "He wants a warrant for the arrest

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of Roger Baldwin of Baldwin's Forge!"

Slaven threw a fluttering glance up at the face of Roger Baldwin, and turned pale. Nevertheless he dipped his quill into the ink pot and wrote rapidly. He sanded the paper to blot it. The swishing sound of the sand became magnified in the waiting stillness of the tap room. Slaven looked up again, fussed nervously with his shirt frills, and said in a voice that squeaked like a rusty hinge:

"Will one of you gentlemen call the constable?"

"You won't need him!" exclaimed Baldwin, in a voice which he scarcely recognized as his own.

He reached across the table and lifted the justice by the rolling collar of his bottle-green coat; he held him at arm's length clear of the floor while with the other hand he picked up the warrant. Baldwin's foot shot out and kicked the table away.

"Open your mouth!" he growled. His eyes were lighted by the blue fires of an inferno of wrath. Slaven shuddered, and his jaw dropped. Into his mouth Baldwin stuffed the warrant, crammed it out of sight behind chattering teeth, and slapped the jaws of Squire Slaven shut again.

"Now eat it!" he ordered.

He dropped the man to the floor and turned to the Lombards.

"You," he said, in a low voice, "know very well that I take some of the best magnetic iron ore in the Adirondacks out of my shaft on the Split Rock Patent. I send better iron to market because I take more care in the making of the billets that go from Baldwin's Forge than any other iron master in these mountains! You men are rich and I am so poor that I can hardly meet my bills, and yet you begrudge me the markets that I have for the iron from one fire! You've asked for war, and now you're going to get it!"

This public quarrel among the iron barons held the tap-room breathless. Word had seeped out into the street and men were coming in on tiptoe to hear.

Hendrick Lombard, the spokesman, cleared his throat.

"Baldwin," he said, "the foundries that can get your iron won't buy ours. That's a dangerous trend. Stop fussing with your iron as though you were an old woman knitting a mitten or you won't ship iron out of Bessboro!"

"The Black Lombards can't stop it!" retorted Baldwin. "Do you want anything of me, the three of you at once, here and now?"

Dane Lombard plunged forward, but the older, heavier Hugh caught him in his arms and for a moment their rough black heads were pressed together as they struggled. Hendrick stepped between them and Baldwin.

"We'll deal with you in our own way," he announced.

Baldwin laughed shortly, turned his back on the three of them, and walked without haste from the tap room.

TWO things he knew to a certainty. Although he had done it with no thought of effect, his offer to fight three such men as the Lombards at once would raise him mightily in the estimation of every working man in the iron country. The second thing he knew was that from this hour he was engaged in a war without quarter. Only victory could save his business, and perhaps his life.

For three fourths of the way to the lake from their respective forges the Lombards and Baldwin used the same highway. On the way home from Bessboro, Baldwin rode slowly with an eye for the possibility of future ambuscades. It would be well to have the brush cleared back in places and he might even have to arm his teamsters with shotguns. He did not have any idea of where the Lombards would strike next but his loaded wagons and valuable draft horses were a vulnerable spot. Any serious delay in getting his scanty output of iron loaded and shipped would mean the loss of a contract.

He had come to the fork of the roads where one turned toward his forge and the other went on to the little hamlet of Lombardsville, when the broken pounding of

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hoofs on the hard roadway told him that some rider was in trouble. He rounded a turn and saw a beautiful, high-strung chestnut standing on its hind legs while the young lady in the side-saddle held her seat with admirable horsemanship and tried to force the chestnut past a snake that lay coiled in the road.

There was just as good horseflesh as this in the Adirondacks forests, but the girl was a sight strange to the country. A little boot that must have been made in New York or Paris showed below the edge of a voluminous black skirt that swept the chestnut from shoulder to flank. She seemed to have been moulded into the bodice of her riding habit. Her jaunty hat with one curling white plume stayed by some miracle on a mass of black hair which somehow reminded Baldwin of a starless summer night. The girl's black eyes sparkled and her cheeks flushed pink. She flashed a smile at Roger Baldwin and for the first time in many months iron and the making of iron went completely out of his mind.

"My horse is a stranger to woods and snakes!" she exclaimed.

Baldwin reined up beside her.

"He's frightened," he said. "All he needs is a little petting. I'll lead him past the snake."

He put his hand on the bit and stroked the chestnut's nose. The blue of his eyes was dark and laughing now and there was no hint in his face of that other man who had thrashed the three Lombard bullies.

"May I have the honor," he asked, "of introducing myself? I am Roger Baldwin of Baldwin's Forge."

THE color was swept instantly from the face of the girl and her eyes burned into his.

"Devil Baldwin!" she whispered. "The one who rides men down and beats them unconscious! Let go my reins!"

Suddenly her gloved hand lifted and she struck. The end of a little riding whip bit at Roger Baldwin's cheek like a giant wasp.

The girl stared, with a little gasp. Baldwin, for the moment stricken by a kind of numb amazement, raised his hand to his face. A trickle of blood was running down from a spot where the flesh had been nicked out. His quick and terrible anger flared.

"That's a weighted lash!" he cried. "If you use that on a horse you ought to be beaten! Give me that whip!"

He reached for it and the girl suddenly pulled the chestnut back on his haunches.

"I would use it on you!" she panted. "But not on a horse!"

"Give me that whip!" thundered Baldwin again, and he rode Black Bob straight at her. But Baldwin met horsemanship almost equal to his own. She brought her mount around so that he took the impact on the shoulder. Baldwin missed his lunge for her whip hand and before he could right himself she had put her horse to a dead run.

Roger Baldwin took no account of the direction in which she was going. He thought of nothing but overtaking that girl and wrenching the whip out of her hand. There was not time now to wonder how she had heard of Devil Baldwin or where she had come from. Black Bob crept up to the chestnut's flank, forged ahead a little, and then the horses were running shoulder to shoulder. The girl struck and missed and then, strangely, thought Baldwin, she pulled her horse down. Suddenly he realized that he had ridden into Lombardsville and that Hugh Lombard was running toward him, shouting.

Baldwin laughed. Now he knew who this girl was. Rosalie Lombard, who had been a leggy girl in pigtails the last time he saw her, had come home from a young lady's seminary. He turned in the saddle as Black Bob carried him close, and threw an arm around the girl, pinning her elbows to her sides. He tore the weighted whip from her hand with a wrench that stripped away the palm of her glove. Then, while she fought silently, he bent down and kissed her on the mouth.

The next instant the horses separated, and Devil Baldwin had to let her go or

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drag her out of the saddle. He saw a wagon stake swinging at him with the rage distorted face of Hugh Lombard behind it.

He caught the stake in his hands and Black Bob's next jump jerked it away from Lombard with such force that the man tottered and nearly fell. Baldwin whirled and saw the other two brothers coming up from their forge by the river. He brought the club down over the head of the massive Hugh, and dropped him to hands and knees in the road.

Roger turned and raised his hat to the other brothers, and shot out of Lombardsville faster than any horse there could travel. The last thing he saw was the face of Rosalie, chalk white, staring after him.

CHAPTER III.

HORSEWHIPPED.

ROGER BALDWIN galloped home aflame with desire for that Lombard whom he had kissed in Lombardsville. Under their very noses! He chuckled at the thought. What furies must now possess the brothers! But even as he laughed to himself at the triumph over his enemies he knew that he had been caught in a trap stronger than steel. For he wanted to marry that girl whose body had pressed against his for a moment, whose hands had struck wildly at the face still bleeding from her whip. The touch of her cheek, her lips . . . he thought of wild roses fresh with morning dew.

But Baldwin sobered as he unsaddled Black Bob and rubbed him down with his own hands. The girl had hated him the moment she heard his name and now her hatred must be even more deadly. He knew of no way to speak with her again unless he carried her off bodily from Lombardsville, and that he resolved to do even before Bob began to munch his oats. Yes, he would take her and then let them make a blood feud of it if they wanted to!

Outside the stable Baldwin paused to look over his little barony. The long, shed-like building that was the forge stood on the very edge of the swift and tumbling Raven River. The undershot waterwheel clanked in the evening calm, making itself heard over the steady rush of waters. Above the chimney a pink stain grew against the darkening sky.

The night shift was just coming to work. Men left the log cabins and little boxlike frame dwellings and went down to the river with a stop, perhaps, at the store for a plug of tobacco. From the white house on the hill that had belonged to his father to the water's edge this all belonged to Roger Baldwin, and he was proud of it.

A brawny, silver haired man with the eyes of a faithful dog saw Roger and turned aside on his way to the forge. This was Jock Douglas, head hammerman and the one employee who knew a little more than Baldwin himself about the making of iron.

"If so be you can, Mr. Baldwin," he said, "I wish you'd come to the forge with me for a few minutes before you go to supper. It's time to open the fire and I can't stay here to talk."

Baldwin swung along beside him in silence and they entered the great cavernous shed where the yellow light of candle lanterns and the red glare of fire made the picture of an inferno. Grimy coal stags went back and forth with huge charcoal baskets.

The bloomer, of necessity a man of skill and experience, hung on the great tongs with which the glowing bloom of iron was taken from the fire. It went under the hammer and cherry red sparks showered out into the half lit gloom. After the first crucial moments Jock Douglas found time to talk.

"There's going to be trouble from the Lombards," he said, "and I want to tell you, Mr. Baldwin, every man of the night and day shifts will stand by no matter what comes! They've found out what you done for Baptiste Frechette today, and they's a lot of other things like that in the past. The men'll fight for you as well as work, and they've got families, too. They ain't bullies and drifters like half of the Lombard gang."

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For a moment Baldwin was silent, not finding words.

He knew how hard speech came for men like Jock Douglas, and understood what this loyalty was worth.

Not being able to say anything he thrust out his hand and gripped the blackened paw of the hammerman in acknowledgment.

"I know trouble's coming, Jock," he said. "I'll get some shotguns and powder and ball and arm every teamster. It might be well to send arms to the men at the ore bed. A good charge of blasting powder in the shaft would destroy all our timbering."

"Aye, sir," replied Douglas. "With the Black Lombards you can't be too careful! They're good haters!"

WHEN Roger Baldwin went to bed that night a vague uneasiness filled him. Alternately he saw the Lombard brothers bearing down on him with death in their dark faces, and Rosalie smiling across a gulf so vast that no human effort could bridge it.

It was sometime during the long hours of the latter part of the night when he got out of his huge four poster bed to look down toward the crimson light that mushroomed up over the chimney of the forge. While he stood at the window telling himself that he was a nervous, sentimental fool a streamer of flame shot up in the darkness at a little distance from the crimson topped chimney. That single flame wavered, curled downward, and became a thick pillar as it rose again. Only then did Baldwin realize that the forge building was on fire.

As he struggled frantically into boots and breeches a shotgun crashed down there somewhere among the buildings. The scream of a man in agony rose above the never ending murmur of the river and clank of the waterwheel. As Baldwin left his house, running, the clamor of fighting men became loud enough to drown out the other sounds of the night. Before he reached the burning forge, where men grappled and struck in the weird light, he knew what had happened. The Lombards had dared open warfare instead of the guerrilla fighting that he had expected. They had come to destroy him.

Before he was near enough to strike a blow, Baldwin saw the great boned frame of Jock Douglas at the head of a little knot of men which was being pushed slowly back from the forge by overwhelming numbers. The raiders were everywhere. As his men of the day shift came out of their houses, half asleep, they were met and knocked senseless by odds of three to one. The whole scene was lighted now by the burning of the great shed and Baldwin saw that the battle was already lost. If his men could have been gathered under his leadership to meet this attack they might have handled twice or three times their number.

But now only the small handful around Douglas were making any effective resistance.

Baldwin saw the unmistakable figures of the three Lombards as they advanced to crush Douglas. If they could be laid out on the ground where already a score of men were disabled there might still be hope. Alone and without a weapon Roger Baldwin charged them. He leaped and kicked, and sank his boot heel into the face of Dane Lombard. That reckless fighter, blinded by pain, groped in a circle to find his enemy. Baldwin struck twice with his fists at Hendrick and stretched him motionless in the dirt. Then the mighty Hugh had Roger in his grip, feeling for a hold.

Baldwin slipped away, leaving his shirt in Lombard's hands. He beat a tattoo against the bull-like head, but still Lombard came on. They closed, and with a frantic strength he had not known himself to possess Baldwin swung Hugh Lombard's feet clear of the ground with a cross buttock hold.

But at that instant the world dissolved in a shower of sparks for Roger Baldwin. He knew that someone had hit him on the head and he was powerless to do anything

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about it. His strength turned to water and he pitched forward into darkness.

ROGER BALDWIN opened his eyes again to the red glare of the burning heap that had been his forge. He remembered the fight and the bitterness of defeat, but at first he could not understand just what was taking place now. He found himself on his knees facing a hitching post, with his arms bound around it so he could not move more than an inch or two in any direction. He was stripped to the waist. For the moment he was alone. Dark figures lay on the ground here and there and some of them were being carried away by the raiders. The wailing of women came from the little cabins and houses. A man lying near the flaming mass of timbers groaned continuously.

As Baldwin's head cleared he strained at the ropes that bound him and tried to lift the hitching post out of the ground. But before he could do more than work it a little loose he saw the shoulders of one of the Lombards silhouetted against the fire. Then the other two appeared, and they all came toward him.

"He's come to," said Hendrick, "and it's time we finished with him. It will be daylight in an hour or so and we don't want to be seen here."

"Bah!" snorted Hugh. "He won't go to law! He'll fight!"

"Not after I get through with him," said Dane Lombard. "I'd like to burn him at the stake for what he did to Rosalie!"

Then Baldwin saw with unbelieving horror what was in store for him. Dane Lombard's arm swung and what was known as a bull whip cracked in the air with a sound like a pistol shot. Ten feet of braided rawhide, tapering down from a loaded butt to a knotted lash. It was an implement which, in a skilled hand, could be made to take a man's hide off inch by inch.

This thing could not be. The humiliation of defeat, the almost certain financial ruin from the destruction of his forge were swept out of the mind of Roger Baldwin by this greater catastrophe. Slaves were whipped. That a free man should be subjected to this humiliation was beyond belief. His very spirit would be crushed: he would not have the power left in him to raise an arm or strike a blow.

Dane Lombard advanced. But as he drew back his arm, hoofs pounded into the firelight and Baldwin knew instantly the chestnut horse that Rosalie Lombard had ridden that day. Then he saw that the disheveled figure that slid from its back was she. A man's jacket hung in folds from her slim shoulders. The mass of black hair, unbound, curled to her waist. A man's breeches were rolled up against the riding boots. She had ridden bareback to be in at the death, thought Baldwin.

"Rosalie!" bellowed Hugh. "Are you crazy, to disgrace yourself like this? Go home!"

"Let her watch!" exclaimed Dane. "Now that she's here. Maybe that's what she came for, but I don't see how she found out what was going on tonight."

The girl uttered no sound. For an instant she looked down at Roger Baldwin, kneeling against the post. Then her eyes lifted to the whip that her brother swung in low circles above his head. Without a word she sprang at him. Her hands tore viciously at the whip and when she could not get it out of his powerful grasp she struck him in the face with her small fists. He backed away, shouting protests.

"Take her off!" he yelled.

Hendrick Lombard was quick to think and act. He seized Rosalie's arms from behind and held her motionless.

"What's the matter with you?" he cried. "We burned the forge on our own account but we're doing this for you!"

"Then don't do it!" she screamed. "You inhuman beasts!"

"Hold her where she can see!" ordered Dane furiously. "It will teach the little vixen a lesson! This is a man's business!"

The girl covered her face, sobbing. The whip whistled through the air and laid a rod of fire across the bare back of Roger Baldwin. He made one last mighty effort to uproot the post, and the ropes cut into

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his flesh. Then he sank forward, shuddering. This was the end. So great was his spiritual agony that he scarcely felt the rawhide that cut his back. He let go his fierce hold upon consciousness.

ROGER BALDWIN awoke again with the faint odor of lard in his nostrils and his face pressed into the grateful coolness of dew drenched grass. Hands moved up and down his tortured back, kneading the lacerated flesh with a slow rhythm, working the soothing lard into the cuts and bruises. Baldwin drew a great breath that shook him from head to foot and lay still, content for the moment to have the ministration without knowing whence it came, without thinking either of the past or the future. He remembered what had happened. He was, he thought, a living dead man, beaten and disgraced. And there was no hope for him.

He was lifted and soft cloths were bound around his back and shoulders and a voice boomed into the stillness of the early morning.

"*'Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed!'*"

Baldwin twisted and looked up into the deep eyes of old Zeb Potter. The words were to his wounded spirit what the lard and the gentle hands of the old man had been to his body.

He had been persecuted, but he was not utterly forsaken, even though it was only this old tramp who came to him in his hour of greatest need. He was cast down, but now he realized he was not destroyed while there was still the spirit of battle within him. He would rise up again and take a revenge upon the Lombards more terrible than any injury they had been able to conceive for him.

Baldwin sat up and looked around. The blackened ruins of the forge were still smouldering. From some of the workmen's chimneys wisps of smoke were rising. The men would be up and about early today. Only the river was as it had been, singing its cheerful way towards the lake.

"Zeb," said Baldwin, "you've helped me. If I have anything you want, it's yours for the asking."

The old man's magnificent mane of white hair moved slowly from side to side.

"I don't want anything," he said.

A MAN limped out of the one of the better frame houses, with a cane in his hand and half his head hidden by bandages. It was Jock Douglas and he came as fast as his rather uncertain legs would carry him to where Baldwin and Zeb sat on the grass.

"I was knocked out last night, Mr. Baldwin," he said, "or I'd have hunted you up. I didn't come to until my woman was fixing up my head. Just now she called me and said she seed you out here."

"You put up a good fight, Jock," Baldwin told him. "I saw you just before they got me."

"It didn't do no good!" Douglas shook his head sadly. "What be the orders for today?"

"Rest!" exclaimed the iron master. "There'll be orders for tonight for every man who can stand on his legs. If I live this means the end of Lombard Brothers!"

Zebulon Potter stood up and tightened the rope that held his jeans.

"I thought I could put out this here fire," he muttered, in a low, troubled voice, "but 'the wisdom of men is the foolishness of God!' It's got to burn itself out to the end!"

"Kind of cracked!" whispered Douglas, with a glance after the majestic figure of the old man.

"Yes," agreed Baldwin. "But he's been a friend to me today. And if the time ever comes when he needs me—"

"'Scuse me, Mr. Baldwin," interrupted Jock. "That makes me think of something. If you need extry men I know where you can get a passel of 'em. Baptiste Frechette ain't nothing here but a teamster, but he's a big man in Frenchtown, that Canuck settlement over beyond Crowquill Mountain. He told me last night he could get fifty men, or mebbe more, for a fight. Wanted to get into it

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himself last night with a broken arm, he did! His woman had to hold him. Most of them Frenchies fights with knives and they're tough men to handle!"

Roger Baldwin sprang to his feet. A tide of joy surged up within him and he lifted his long arms, rippling with muscle, to the morning sun. He laughed and his hurts seemed to be wiped away by the promise of revenge.

"Jock!" he cried. "A plan came to me while I was sitting here, but I lacked enough men for it! Now I have the Lombards under my heel. Thanks to Baptiste! Get those men for me this morning!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE TEST.

SINCE the first one of the new, rare craft propelled by steam-driven paddle wheels had appeared on Lake Champlain there had not been such a crowd gathered at Yardley's public wharf in Bessboro. From early morning the news of the destruction of Baldwin's forge had been spreading through the countryside. And with the news went vague rumors that something else of equal or greater importance was going to happen in the war that Devil Baldwin was waging single handed.

All day men had been going to and from the long barge that lay moored to the stone dock, half filled with Roger Baldwin's billets of iron. They had worked with frantic haste getting the barge ready for the long trip to the south. Five days it would take by lake and canal and river to reach New York, and five days to return. The barge was roughly schooner rigged, depending on her own canvas for power. Baldwin had no money to hire one of the chunky little steamboats which the Lombards used to tow their barges, and thus make better time.

One of these towing boats now lay with steam up a little way off-shore: ready, apparently, to take out the two barges of Lombard Brothers. Since mid-morning Lombard workmen, pressed from forge and mine, had been helping teamsters and the dock men fill these two barges with a cargo of iron. It would seem that the Lombards were going to race Baldwin for the market.

For many hours Roger, his back and shoulders softly padded with lard and old linen, had sat at the stern of his craft and subjected every man who came on board to the closest scrutiny. If the man was a stranger he had to answer questions. Three times during the day Baldwin had sprung from his seat like a rock hurled from a catapult and thrown a man overboard.

A hundred times he had wondered why the Lombards did not attack him; only to assure himself over again that they had some deep laid plan for his destruction which must wait for the proper hour. He saw all three of them, Dane, Hendrick and Hugh, going about among their men with faces marked by the battle of the night before. Bitterly he realized that the story of his whipping had gone over the country and that this as much as anything had drawn those knots of low voiced spectators who stood banked from the wharf buildings well into the village.

"'*Persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed!*'"

Countless times throughout the day the words had repeated themselves in his mind. He saw now that they had been true, even before old Zeb Potter came to grease and bind his wounds. He had not been forsaken when Rosalie Lombard drove her fists into the face of her brother in a futile effort to save him. He wondered why she had done it. Certainly she must hate him, but just as certainly she had taken his part in that hideous, lurid night.

With sunset a breeze came up out of the north, and this was the last thing that Baldwin needed for his plan against the Lombards. He would have had to wait for a breeze. Men in rowboats headed his barge away from the docks and then Baldwin shook out his canvas. Under fore and mainsails and a jib the barge heeled over a little and stood away on a long tack that

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could carry her out of Bessboro Bay before night had fallen.

AS though that were a signal, the steamboat sent forth volumes of black smoke, her paddle wheels churned frantically, and she settled against a hawser passed from the bow of one of the Lombard barges. Another hawser went from first to the second of them. Lombard Brothers' tow pulled out for broad lake and began slowly to overhaul Baldwin's schooner rigged craft.

He, sitting on the deck house with a spyglass in his hand, knew as little about the intentions of his enemies as the crowd on shore. But he saw that his own plan might fail if the breeze did not freshen so that he could outrun the steamboat. It had been his intention, once outside Bessboro Bay, to cut the hawser from the steamer and force the Lombard boats onto the rocks. When he had finished with them they would be at the bottom of the lake.

But now the steamboat was leaving him behind and the first of the barges had come abreast and passed. He had set his mind with grim patience to follow and wait for more wind when a wild shout came from the bow. The dozen men on deck, all veterans of the battle at the forge, ran forward with cries and curses. Baldwin, who had taken the wheel, peered into the gathering mists of the night to see what had happened.

The lights of the steamboat were swinging in across his bow. It had turned and was coming back, on a course parallel with his vessel. At first the maneuver seemed utterly insane. Then, when it was too late to do anything about it, Baldwin saw the Lombard plot. They were going to place the hawser between the two barges so that he would sail directly against it, and the Lombard crews, as their boats swung in, would be able to board him from each side!

If Baldwin tried to head up into the wind in his lumbering craft he would crash into the first of the barges. If he risked jibing the chances were that he would ram the second one head on.

For a moment he hesitated, and then a slow grin uptilted his mouth corners and the devils began to dance in his eyes. Perhaps it would be better to do things their way than his own. He lashed the wheel and went forward among his men. Jock Douglas was there in spite of Baldwin's command that he stay at home this night.

"Jock," said Roger, "it's going to work out all right for us this way. Fall back on the cabin and let them come aboard as fast as they can, the faster the better, and keep out of the fighting yourself. You've had enough!"

The steamboat puffed and plowed mightily, now astern of Baldwin's vessel. The gray shapes of the other two barges closed in slowly with their lights showing and their decks spotted with men. The nose of Baldwin's barge suddenly plunged against the hawser and lifted it from the water. The Lombard boats swung around on each side while yells of derision went up from their decks. Baldwin ran to the little group of men near the cabin companionway, armed with ax handles, wagon stakes, and half length crowbars.

"Remember, Jock!" he cried. "Hold your ground until the Lombards are on board with all of their men who'll follow!"

He plunged down into the cabin just as the first of the enemy barges thudded against the side of his own boat. The other followed it a moment later. And the three boats rubbed and bumped on the choppy surface of the lake.

The Lombards had prepared well for this attack. Their men threw grappling irons and in less than a minute Baldwin's barge was locked helpless between the two enemy boats. Slowly the three moved forward together under the impulse of his canvas, into the thickening night where there would be no one to see what took place.

THERE was a moment of comparative stillness and then the flood of the Lombard men came over the bulwarks to port and starboard. The two waves

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swept in and met, to form another that dashed up toward the little group of men who waited silently by the deck house.

The black heads of the Lombard brothers were in that first wave. They hurled themselves forward together and swept Douglas and his handful of men backward. The clubs rose and fell, cracking on heads and on other clubs. The shouts of bloody triumph, the curses, groans and cries of pain joined in a terrible medley that grew louder as the fight raged to an excess of madness.

Then, when Douglas and his men were completely surrounded, a hatch cover far forward on the barge lifted and a dark face topped by a red knitted toque appeared over the coaming. The man who came up from below with monkey-like agility held a wicked looking knife between his teeth.

Behind him swarmed other men of the same pattern. For the most part small in stature, weatherbeaten to the color of ancient oak, they were as tough as the iron cargo of the boat, these Canucks from Frenchtown. They were as tough as the iron billets and as faithful to a friend as iron is to the magnet.

While these men swept in a devastating horde on the rear of the attacking force, Roger Baldwin came up the cabin companionway with a hickory club in his hand and the flames of revenge leaping in his heart. Behind him followed another swarm of the friends of Baptiste Frechette. They came to devote themselves utterly, knives, feet and teeth, to the service of this tall Yankee *seigneur* who had treated their Baptiste like a friend and brother.

The men of the Lombards were caught like grapes in a winepress. Blood stained the deck and trickled thinly into the scuppers. The Lombard men who had tried to retreat aft under the impact on their rear were driven forward again to halt amidships, and there they had to stand.

The tall form of Roger Baldwin plunged here and there through the sweating, gasping press of bodies, regardless of everything but a chance to strike a blow at one of the three black heads which at last drew together as their men melted around them. They fought on hopelessly.

Two panting Frenchmen with axes in their hands found Baldwin.

"*Monsieur!*" exclaimed one of them. "We have done it!"

"Scuttled both barges?" he demanded. "As I told you?"

"But yes!" The men nodded. "They sink ver' fast, those iron boat!"

"Then," cried Baldwin, trembling so that the bloodstained club shook in his hand, "the Lombards can't escape me!"

THE canvas was down on Roger Baldwin's barge and it drifted alone on the night shrouded water. Somewhere astern the iron of Lombard Brothers lay at the bottom of the lake. The steamboat that they had hired, having done its work, had long since chugged away in an aura of sparks.

Roger Baldwin was master of his barge and of the prisoners who huddled forward, roped together: of the wounded men who lay side by side on the deck and of the stout fighters who had won this battle for him.

But more than any other fruit that the victory could bring was the sight of the three stalwart Lombards kneeling on the deck, facing the bulwarks, with outstretched arms lashed down to the rail.

They were stripped to the waist. Blood trickled down the back of the mighty Hugh, from a gash in his head. One of Dane's ears, torn by teeth or knife, dripped steadily. Hendrick, half conscious, drooped and hung against the lashings of his wrists.

Roger Baldwin waved back the men who had bound his enemies. He turned away from the light thrown by a cluster of lanterns hung on the mast and went down into the dim cabin. There he flung open a locker and took out a bull whip. His battered, bleeding hands tested its strength while the devils played in the steel blue depths of his eyes.

A small noise, as of someone trying to speak, snapped him around on his heel. He

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looked down at a frail, grimy figure in the short pantaloons and roundabout jacket of a half grown boy; looked into a flaming face and eyes which could only belong to Rosalie Lombard. Her face flushed scarlet and then the blood left it to a startling pallor.

"I know what you're going to do!" she whispered.

"How did you get here?" demanded Baldwin, when he could speak.

"I came on board as a water boy," she told him, in a small voice. "And I hid under one of the bunks."

"What for?"

"I felt—I felt—" she faltered. "After what they did to you I felt—"

Now Baldwin could not speak. Something gripped his throat.

"Are you really a devil?" she blazed at him, suddenly. "What made you kiss me yesterday in Lombardsville?"

"Because," answered Roger, and the words seemed to come without volition, "I loved you!"

"And that," she breathed, "is what I felt!"

They stood staring at each other in silence. The bull whip was between them. Slowly Baldwin held it up for her to see.

"I am going to lash them," he said, "until Lombard blood runs on the deck!"

"I cannot blame you!" she cried. "I know how every blow last night cut into your heart! But what of you and me, Roger Baldwin, if you do this thing? Will we be . . . the same afterwards?"

"I am going to whip them," he said, and he went up the companionway.

Every fiber of Baldwin's being vibrated with suffering and yet a whip more terrible than the one he carried drove him on. He was lashed by the bitter stripes of his pride. If it cost him his life's happiness yet he must do this thing. He crossed the deck and stood over the three silent men.

THEN beside the bound hand of Dane Lombard appeared another, gleaming with water in the lantern light. A sleek white head came above the rail. Zeb Potter, his great torso heaving from the effort of a mile long swim, swung a leg over the bulwark and stood dripping on the deck. While a murmur swept the watching men Zeb pressed the water from his beard and looked calmly into the face of Roger Baldwin.

"Roger," he said, "I swum out to tell you that this here is your chance to be a great man!"

"Damn you again!" cried Baldwin, furiously. "Why didn't you preach to the Lombards last night?"

"They's a time to every purpose," answered the old man, "and this here time is yours. Take it."

"I have!" Baldwin roared at him in a voice of thunder. "I have conquered these three men and I'm going to destroy them as they tried to destroy me!"

Zebulon Potter wagged his head and for a moment sadness replaced the steady peace of his gaze.

"You ain't conquered anything," he said, slowly. "Not yourself, nor them! There ain't but one way to conquer! Go smelt your ore in their forge until you can build a new one, and learn them what you know about iron! Let them ship their billets down the lake in your barge! You sunk theirs! And then you'll conquer David Baldwin and the Black Lombards! What conquers is the thing that's brought this poor girl here to her knees, the thing that's making her cry her eyes out!"

When the voice of the old man ceased, no word was spoken for many seconds. Roger Baldwin felt a great rush of anger that blinded him and stiffened his arm. Then he looked down at the bowed head of Rosalie, and hesitated.

He fought to withhold that first blow, for if it fell a hundred others would follow. What would they think of him, these hard bitten men whom he had led in battle? What would the town and county and the other iron masters of Raven River think of him? They would say that Devil Baldwin had turned soft, too soft to revenge a deadly injury; that a girl and a half cracked old man had made a fool of him.

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But even while his anger clamored against these arguments a power greater and stronger than the wrath of vengeance was taking possession of him.

Just as he knew true iron, freed from the dross of the ore, so he recognized this other power as mightier than his rage, his arm like tempered steel. For the first time he willed to conquer himself; to yield his revenge to the happiness of the girl who knelt at his feet.

With this desire a miracle of change took place within him. The whips of his fury became shadows. He was free with the freedom of spirit. He lifted his head. The rawhide in his hand slipped unnoticed to the deck.

Baldwin took a knife from the belt of one of his men and closed Rosalie's fingers around the hilt.

"Cut them free," he said. Her eyes met his and in them for a moment he looked down the eternal vistas of reality.

Rosalie's hand drew the blade across the ropes that bound her brothers. Baldwin helped her to lift them up; and instead of the bitterness of soul that he had expected at the touch of a Black Lombard he felt peace that was like a river of clear waters.

THE END

Drink Your Diamond!

WHEN carbon atoms form in octahedral chains of the cubic system, pure diamond (the whitest, hardest and most abrasive substance) is the result. If the carbon chains form into crystals of six-sided scales the result is graphite (the blackest, softest and a very fine lubricating substance). And both graphite and diamond are pure carbon!

The octahedral, isometric crystalline arrangement of diamond atoms gives it the unique characteristic of refracting light. Light rays, striking into the peculiar arrangement of diamond atoms, are bent back upon themselves. Thus the diamond glows, gleams and glitters in any light.

Though diamonds are exceedingly hard, the position of their atoms gives them easy lines of "cleavage." Lapidarists take advantage of these cleavage lines in splitting diamonds.

Very small diamonds can be made artificially in man's laboratories by dissolving pure carbon in molten iron and suddenly cooling the mass under enormous pressure.

Contrary to popular opinion, a diamond may easily be destroyed! You take a diamond, heat it to whiteness, and dip it into a tank of pure oxygen, and it will burn as easily as a piece of coal. The gas arising from this combustion is carbon dioxide (CO_2)—the same gas that bubbles in your soda water at your popular soft drink fountain! So when you have reduced your diamond to carbon dioxide, mix it with sugar, water and vanilla extract and drink it!

Or if you do not wish such an expensive drink, run the carbon dioxide through a solution of lime water. This will result in a precipitation of calcium carbonate, which is marble!

So, if you wish, you can make yourself the most expensive tombstone in the world—if you have enough diamonds!

—*Joseph W. Skidmore.*

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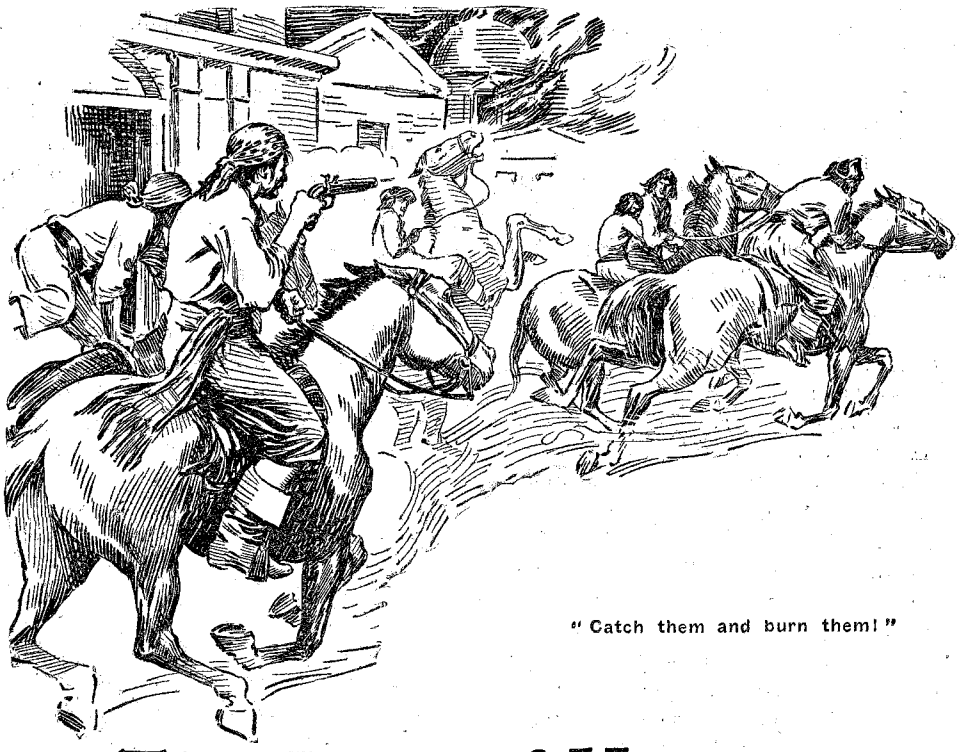

"Catch them and burn them!"

The Dew of Heaven

By GEORGE CHALLIS

Even if Ivor Kildare managed to escape Morgan's trap, the future was so perilous he dared not hope to leave Panama alive

WHEN Louis d'Or and Ivor Kildare (who sometimes is known as Tranquillo II) landed at Tortuga to dig for buried treasure, they were suddenly taken in surprise when their small band of followers became mutinous. After a very gory battle and much slaughter, the leaders still found themselves among the living. They learn that the treasure which they are seeking is actually in Panama within the Church of San Francisco.

Ivor, Louis, and the Irishman, Padraic More, sail to Porto Bello, and make their way across the isthmus, entering Panama by stealthy means. Ivor there sees his lady, the charming Ines Heredia, for a short time. Meanwhile, Louis and Padraic have fallen into the hands of the Spanish and are imprisoned. Ivor is himself jailed trying to free them. They are sentenced to die when Ines pleads that they be put aboard a galley. Her request is granted and all three suffer the brand of the galley slave.

The galley meets a small English ship and engages it in battle. During the ramming, the English sailors throw hammers and chisels to the slaves chained at the oars so that they may free themselves to fight against the Spanish. The captain of the galley is killed and the Spanish are massacred by the Negro galley slaves.

Kildare and Louis free themselves, Kildare assuming command of the galley, and sailing her near the coast of the Panama Isthmus. He decides to visit Captain Henry Morgan, notorious buccaneer, and convinces him that their combined forces can successfully attack the City of Panama. So under the commission of the Royal Council of Jamaica and the leadership of Morgan, three thousand pirates set off to sack that city of fabulous fortune.

Only after suffering from starvation and the bites of forest insects, do the pirates finally come in sight of the fabulously rich Panama. While Morgan makes a frontal attack on the city, Kildare, with the help of Captain Bartholomew, leads the sea forces, which storm the harbor. It is then that the Santo Spírito containing whole tons of silver in her hold is captured. After a long struggle, the Spaniards are completely routed on land and sea.

This story began in the Argosy for September 7

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CHAPTER XXII (*Continued*).

RETREAT.

THE savage Englishman caught the servant by the shoulder. He needed the prick of the stiletto point against the bone of his forehead before he stammered out that his mistress was with another woman at the Church of San Francisco.

Kildare left the house on the run. As he sped down the street he saw a dust cloud billowing not far from him, and out of the mouth of a lane rushed a burst of Spanish fugitives from the battlefield.

They had thrown away all weapons to lighten their flight and still they were not far ahead of the pursuit, for now Kildare saw three ragged men waving machetes and yelling triumph as they galloped on a trio of mules. The Spaniards themselves seemed hardly less dangerous to Kildare than these recent companions of his.

The church doors yawned wide open and he thought, as he leaped through them, that an organ was playing a strange lament. It was only the moaning of many voices. And now as his eyes grew accustomed to the dull light of the interior, he could see them on their knees before the high altar and at the shrines. And some lay on their faces with outstretched arms praying, weeping.

He called the name of Ines Heredia. The sound of his voice rolled slowly back to him on a faint and minor key. But not a one of the figures stirred.

He was in despair, bewildered, when two men ran into the church behind him. They were Louis d'Or and Padraic More, and they laid stern hands on him.

The Frenchman panted: "We could not let you go, Tranquillo. But Morgan's men have come as far as the quay. The Santo Spirito can't delay much longer or the devils will be at her in small boats and swallow her at a gulp. Tranquillo, let everything go and come with us! Damn the treasure in San Francisco's church."

"I'd rather give up the eyes out of my head," said Kildare. "She's here in this church. I'm thinking nothing of the treasure. Help me find her, brothers!"

"Shall we carry him away by force?" demanded Padraic More.

"We'd have to kill him first," said Louis d'Or. "This damned English stubbornness!—Have you searched in the crypt, Tranquillo?"

They found the way to it at once, and cowering in corners of the lower room, shrinking away under the cobwebbed arches of the vaulting, they found a score of women.

"Ines!" cried Kildare.

She came to him suddenly out of the heart of a small group in a corner. There was not much light to see her by, but the Irishman exclaimed: "*Hai,* Tranquillo! No wonder you brought Morgan to Panama for this. I had forgotten, for one."

Louis d'Or said nothing at all. But he took off the plumed and sword-slashed and red-streaked tatters of his yellow velvet hat as he stared at the girl.

There was no time for a greeting; there was only a moment for Kildare to hold her away from him by the arms and reassure his eyes that they had not lied to his imagination all these days of the separation.

"Louis d'Or," said Kildare, "can we take her through the streets like this? We could never get from Panama to the ship with a woman like Ines."

"We can try," said Louis d'Or, still staring in a queer, helpless way at the girl. For he was seeing her not as on that day when he parted her and Kildare and let her drift back into the hands of the Spaniards, but as by revelation in the dim light of the crypt he watched her face and saw the tremor that shook Kildare.

"We can try," said Louis d'Or. "There are three of us, and we can keep her in the center. Are you ready, Tranquillo?"

Here the voice of the Irishman broke in on them.

He was pointing his huge hand toward the wall, where many a grave, in long rows, was stepped by stones, on some of which were mere inscriptions, and on

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others carved coats-of-arms. It was at one of these that Padraic More pointed, and went stalking toward it like a man entranced.

"The peacock!" he cried. "By God, the peacock of Tranquillo!"

It might have been intended as a bird with spread wings, for the carving was curiously rude and childish, but certainly the imagination could make the image into that of a peacock.

"Behind the peacock's tail—" said Louis d'Or.

He took the broad blade of his dagger and stabbed it repeatedly into the crevices around the stone to loosen the mortar, but in fact the stone was very slightly held. At the third or fourth stroke it slipped and then fell out like a hinged door.

The big fist of Padraic More was instantly in the aperture that opened, and he jerked out a little sack of brown leather, opened and poured into the great cup of his palm a stream of crimson and red and crystal white fires.

They soaked up all the light in the dim crypt; they blinded two of those adventurers with delight.

All the gold and the silver that weighted the huge hull of the Santo Spirito was as nothing compared to this burning Dew of Heaven!

CHAPTER XXIII.

SAMKIN'S DEATH.

THEY hurried Ines Heredia into the upper church and found it a different world. More women were packed into it, and a long, endless tremor of mournful sound kept passing and repassing through the nave.

Outside, other noises sounded—the loud, cracking explosion of a pistol, the shouting of men who had opened their throats and their hearts and grown drunk with the wine of victory.

Kildare, in the shadowy door of the church, waited for a moment and could not give the word to issue into the street. A weakness came over him, a sickness of heart that made him want to shrink back with the girl into a corner of the church like those suppliant women.

"On with you," urged the Irishman.

"Wait," said Louis d'Or. "It's no easy way that's before them now. Cover your face with that veil, *señorita*. For if they see you—"

Kildare, with his own hand, drew the veil across her face. She kept on smiling and saying that she was not afraid, but the moment that the veil was over her features, it seemed to him that she was already dead, and a dim ghost.

Then he mustered his courage and they went out onto the street.

To the Indian he said: "Stay close! You shall have your half of my loot, Luis."

The Indian only laughed.

"Father," he said, "what can I have more than a boat, a spear, and irons for striking the turtles?"

They came out of the dimness of the church into the bright glare of the open day and found in the air the wild uproar of the stricken town and the victors.

There was a queer, heady pungency of perfume which came from a place just down the street where a good number of the buccaneers, letting more precious loot go, were rolling brandy kegs out of a warehouse and knocking in the heads of them.

And wherever they looked they saw houses being broken open, or heard inside the houses the splintering of wood as doors were battered down, and always the continual screaming, pitched so high from the purest terror that it was often impossible to tell whether men or women were crying out.

There was the third element to make the horror perfect. Smoke was sweeping over the town in increasing volume every moment; the retreating Spanish governor had fired the town in a dozen places, and the rising wind was carrying the flames swiftly forward.

That could be forgotten if only they could get to the Santo Spirito and begin to lengthen out blue leagues of sea between

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them and the condemned city. Swiftly they hurried.

Hunchbacked Samkin, a pirate, staggered out of a house under a great load of goods, cast it down and shouted loudly a greeting to Kildare.

"Well done, Tranquillo! When they heard you knocking at the door they all ran home and let us in the back way. Ha! ha! ha! Oh, Tranquillo, well done!"

Kildare, waving his hand, would have passed on, but Samkin had seen something in the step and the clothes of Ines Heredia, and his long arm reached out like that of an ape and snatched the veil from the brightness of her hair and face. The spear of Luis, the Indian, was instantly in the throat of Samkin. He could not even cry out, but fell on his face and kicked at the dust while the blood gushed out in a red pool.

"Murder! *Hai!* Murder!" shouted a dozen voices of buccaneers all in a moment. "They've killed Samkin."

AND a big black-faced man with beard almost to the eyes roared out: "Samkin, are you dead? By God, I'll have a payment for you! Tranquillo, give me the Indian dog!"

"Ay, give us the Indian!" shouted the gathering crowd.

And they came running, bent on trouble.

"You have to give him up," said Louis d'Or softly, at the ear of Kildare. "There's no other way—or the girl will be in danger along with the rest of us."

"Give him up?" said Kildare. He stared at the Indian. "I'll give up my own soul first. *Hai,* brothers! Samkin has a value and I'll pay you for him. You there, with the beard. I'll pay you down a good value for Samkin—but he was drunk, and he stumbled onto the point of the Indian's spear."

"You can pay cash afterwards. I'll have the damned redskin first," said the big buccaneer. He was one of the few who carried a long cut-and-thrust rapier instead of a handy machete, and he had the weapon out at once.

But he did not rush in on Kildare. The reputation of that swordsman was too great for his fame to be clouded even by the brandy which had obscured the brain of the buccaneer. He stood with his long blade ready and sang out to his companions: "There's Tranquillo with a girl under his arm that will ransom for a thousand pounds if ever I saw woman. And now he's laid my brother Samkin dead and won't pay us the Indian that did it. Is that justice? Tranquillo and that damned fop of a Frenchman, Louis d'Or, that cut the throat of Captain Ogden at Port Royal — and More, the Irishman—are the three of them to put down the free gentlemen of the sea?"

It was not much of a speech, but it rang like bells in the ears of the gathering company of buccaneers.

"Justice for the Brothers of the Coast!" they began to shout. "Give up the Indian, Tranquillo."

"Now it's that or dying," said Louis d'Or.

Kildare looked wildly around him and saw that they were just in front of the door of a house.

He said to More: "We can't keep ourselves in the open street, God help us! But we can hold them from behind that door. Pistol the lock of it and we'll get through."

"Ay, and never come out again," growled More.

"Then go on, the pair of you!" exclaimed Kildare. "Take Ines on to the boat—but I can't leave Luis."

The Frenchman exclaimed: "There's no other way. Quickly—with us, *señorita!* Tranquillo will come on at once—"

"*Hai,* Blackbeard!" shouted one of the buccaneers. "Samkin is as dead as stinking fish. What shall we do about it?"

It was true that the huge hands of Samkin no longer kneaded the red mud of the street. He lay still and wallowed no more.

"I'll have blood for him!" yelled Blackbeard. "Who's with me to tackle that dancing devil of a Tranquillo? Who's a friend at my shoulder?"

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There was a general chorus of agreement. The rules of the Brotherhood were both strict and definite. A fair duel was nobody's business, but murder found an instant punishment as Morgan himself had learned with bitter cost, on a time when half his host had left him.

And here the girl, slipping from the protecting arm of tall Louis d'Or, ran back to Kildare.

The Frenchman himself brought out his sword, now, with a sweep that made several of the closing semicircle of buccaneers give ground.

"The door, Pat!" he called to More. "There's nothing for it but this!"

The pistol of More that moment exploded, and his foot kicked in the front door of the house.

"Charge them!" cried Blackbeard. "Do you see they're opening a line of retreat? Charge 'em home!"

The charge came, big capable men with reaching machetes closing on the defenders.

THE swinging blade of Louis d'Or nicked the head of one and staggered him so that he fell across the path of others and set them stumbling and falling. Before the charge had gathered head again, the small party had run through the door of the Spanish house into a momentary safety at least. The long blade of Louis kept back an eager trio of buccaneers until the door could be slammed and furniture dragged to pile against it.

Pistol bullets were smashing through the woodwork by this time. But a party of buccaneers were not apt to be held out of a house simply because the door was closed to them. Some of them commenced to batter against the shutters on both sides of the house, threatening to break in through the windows at any time.

"The back way?" called Kildare anxiously.

Padraic More was already returning with a gloomy face from the rear of the house.

"They've blocked us in on all sides," he said. "Damn the hand and the head of that Indian for running his spear into the throat of Samkin! They're going to cut up the whole batch of us, now."

It was only a moment later, in fact, that two of the shutters were beaten in, and after that the influx poured through the lower floor of the house. The stairs offered the only retreat, and the party poured up them; beneath, the buccaneers closed in a shouting wave about the last way of apparent escape.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FOUR EMERALDS.

FOUR armed men made a force strong enough to guard the narrows of that stairway and even those headlong brutes at the bottom of the steps did not attempt to storm the narrow way. They shouted their threats. Some would have blown the house to bits with a charge of powder, but others pointed out that the fire which was sweeping Panama soon would drive the rats out of their safety.

The flames had increased rapidly before a rising wind. Volleys of sparks and swiftly rolling clouds of smoke washed about the upper windows on the landward side, and out the windows that overlooked the harbor they saw the streaming smoke pour on across the blue of the bay.

There was something else of a painful interest on the bay.

The Santo Spirito had been ordered to stand a bit out from land, but now she was actually under full sail, with the galley, Santa Catalina, urging after her as fast as oars could be strained through the water. The benches of the galley had been filled with Spaniards driven in by the captors.

Now they did the work of the slaves while a crowd of the armed buccaneers filled the places of marines. Once that mob came to handstrokes with Bartholomew and his crew of whites and blacks, the Santo Spirito was sure to change hands quickly.

And the galley was gaining with a star-

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tling speed on the big ship which should have furnished Kildare and the rest with the long bridge back to England. That bridge was gone, whether the Santo Spirito escaped now and continued on her way, or whether it were captured by Morgan's men.

The many oars beat at the water. The handling of them was clumsy enough, and Kildare could see the bright little flashes of water as the blade of a sweep struck clumsily into the waves. Still there was sufficient manpower to make the galley run up on the great ship.

The Santo Spirito at last could no longer trust to her heels. The galley had opened fire. White puff after puff rose from her bows and the hollow booming sound drifted back to the ears of Kildare and his silent party. Those round shot could not be doing the crew of the Bartholomew any good. And at any moment one of the two remaining masts might be knocked over.

That was why the galleon luffed. One by one the big bright muzzles of the port broadside gleamed on the eye. But the whole broadside was bearing before a single gun spoke. After that came a great puff of white that obscured the Santo Spirito from the sea-level to the topmasts.

What was happening behind that cloud of white was hard to tell, but the damage done to the galley was very visible. Kildare could see splinters of gunwale and oars leap up like dust. The rowers, thrown into helpless disorder, allowed their boat to drift helplessly, and then the buccaneers could be seen springing down to the oars.

It was as Kildare saw this that he heard the crashing roar of the broadside come with an echo over the sea. The Santa Catalina was being turned by Morgan's men and driven at full speed away from the peril of a second volley as terrible as the first.

At this a great shouting of rage went up from a great number of the buccaneers, who were gathered along the quay; and Kildare saw the white-bearded face of Jimmy Green above the heads of the rest, raised as he was on the shoulder of his master.

Morgan himself was brandishing a cutlass in a furious rage; no doubt he knew that half the treasure in his conquered city was now weighting down the hold of a ship that would never be his. He left the quay, and Kildare, before the intervening roofs shut him from view, could see the master pirate mounting one of a herd of the Spanish cavalry horses which stood about the quay.

That way to England was closed—that long way around the Horn. What remained to Kildare and the girl, at the best, even if they managed to escape from the trap which held them, except to struggle overland across the isthmus and then vaguely wander in the hope of finding return passage on some trading vessel?

But that future was so dim and dangerous that Kildare dared not look forward to it.

HE looked down at the girl and found that her eyes were fixed on him constantly. The moment that she felt his glance she smiled.

Here there was an outbreak of shouting from the bottom of the stairs and from the street: "Morgan! Morgan!" and a hearty round of cheers.

Kildare said: "If they stop Morgan, we may be saved, all of us. For my sake he may let us go; or for my sake he may let us burn. I can't tell what his mind will be."

Here the front door of the house was flung open and Morgan himself entered with Jimmy Green scampering behind him and running up to his shoulder the instant he came to a stand.

The greatest of all pirates had not accomplished his greatest of victories unscathed. He had a bloodstained rag tied about his head and a few smudges of burned powder did not improve the beauty of his swollen face.

He cried in his husky, battle-worn voice: "Tranquillo! Where are you, Tranquillo?"

"Keep back, all of you, and let me talk to him," said Kildare.

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Then he ventured to show his head above the railing of the stairs.

A roar of anger greeted him from the buccaneers below.

"There he is!" they yelled. "He sends damn Indians to murder white men. There's Samkin in the street lying in mud that he made with his own blood."

Morgan silenced them with a shout out of his bull's throat.

"I see you, Tranquillo," he said. "And are Louis d'Or and More up there with you, along with the Indian?"

"They're here," answered Kildare.

"And the Señorita Heredia, also?"

Kildare hesitated. But she had been seen, and denial would do no good.

"She is here," he said.

Henry Morgan threw back his head and laughed.

"If you love your man," he called up, "come down to me, Ines Heredia. Come down to me, or I'll burn the lot of you like pork."

She made up her mind, instantly, and slipped through the men to the head of the stairs before Kildare caught her and snatched her back.

"Ines, are you mad?" he asked her.

"He would murder you all, Ivor," said the girl.

"Well," said More, "it would be a clean way of dying after a dirty sort of a life."

"Let her come!" shouted Morgan. "You've cheated me of her once, but your luck has run out, Tranquillo. Let her come down to me as she wants to do. There's no other bargain you can make with me! And the fire's close to the house, now. D'you hear?"

There was a great crashing close to the outer wall of the building, a roaring upward of flame, a crackling of burning wood, and almost instantly a wave of increased heat. Plainly the building on one side of the house had fallen in burning ruins, and the flames must be taking hold of the upper, wooden structure of the place where they stood.

Louis d'Or groaned: "Come at my side —we'll charge through them, Tranquillo."

"We could not any more charge through those devils than a cat could get through a pack of dogs," said Kildare.

THEN he felt in a pocket and drew out his share of the treasure which had been found in the crypt of San Francisco. Among the rest, the green glimmer of four great emeralds held his eye.

"Morgan—do you see this?" he asked, and held up one of the stones between thumb and forefinger. "If you burn us, you burn more than five lives. You burn a fortune, Morgan. Are you willing to do that?"

"What is it you have?" called Morgan eagerly. "And where did you find it?"

"By prayer," said Kildare. "But look at the sample!"

He tossed the big emerald into the air and Morgan caught it in his hand. He could not help crying out with delight as he saw the beauty of the stone.

Kildare, glancing around, saw that the girl was disappearing through the door of the next room—and then Morgan was calling: "Come down, Tranquillo, and we'll talk business like a pair of friends. Where did you find this thing?"

"There are three more," said Kildare.

"Three? Is that all? There must be more!"

"What more do you wish? Any one of them would keep a man in clothes and grog the rest of his life! Four of them, Morgan! Do we talk business?"

Morgan looked down again at the emerald in his hand.

"Throw the others down," he called. "If they're worth the first, we'll make a bargain."

"You get the rest," said Kildare, "when you've sent your men back to a distance, cleared the street, and left horses in front of the building. I'll throw the other three to you the moment we're in the saddle."

"I'll see you damned first," said Morgan.

"In the saddle and away?"

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"Not away as fast as bullets can fly—if we try to cheat you," said Kildare.

"Suppose I make the bargain," said Morgan—"Jimmy Green, what shall I do?"

Jimmy Green, twisting to look at his master and then glancing sharply up the stairs toward Kildare, gave exactly the impression that he had shaken his head in denial.

"You see how it is?" said Morgan. "Jimmy Green won't have it. I can't let you all go. Four of these—for four lives—ay, and that leaves the girl behind. The rest of you—why, yes, you may go and be hanged. But not the girl. She stays behind!"

A wisp of smoke blew down the hall and stung the eyes of Kildare. The fire had eaten through the outer wall. The roar of it became louder, instantly.

"We'll let the fire take us first, Morgan!" shouted Kildare. "The girl goes with us!"

Then the voice of Ines Heredia sounded beside him and said: "Let him have his way; and perhaps we can cheat him!" He looked down to her and saw that she had transformed herself into a blackamoor. Black from head to foot!

CHAPTER XXV.

KILDARE VERSUS MORGAN.

ALL that brightness of hair was gone. She had slashed it off with a sharp knife so that it fell raggedly about her shoulders and her face; and she must have washed it with soot from the chimney and combed it out again, because it was perfectly and entirely black.

Her skin was black to the rims of the eyelids, also. From head to foot she must have bathed herself in the foul black of the soot before she put on the clothes she had found in that adjoining room.

They were what any house servant might have appeared in—short white trousers and a cheap cotton shirt, with sandals on her feet. She looked like a trivial bit of a negro lad such as might have been a servant in any house in Panama.

There were faults in the makeup, of course, considering the haste with which it had been done, and her blackness was rather streaked over the skin than put on smoothly. But the transformation was nevertheless so startling that Kildare could not believe his eyes.

He shouted down the stairs: "Morgan, it's for our lives—and we can't win away and keep her with us, at any rate. We'll take your bargain."

"Throw down the other three green beauties, then!" called Morgan.

"Not a one till you've cleared the way for us."

Morgan bellowed: "Clear back, all of you. Away from the house before the burning roof falls in on you. Trust Henry Morgan to make a bargain that will suit you all! Why, you fools, will you argue with me? Give back—and clear the street outside. You — Kilpatrick — bring four horses yonder. Do as I bid you, and on the run!"

The crowd of the buccaneers gave way grudgingly and with a good many oaths, but the authority of their chief was very great on this day, and gradually they retreated from the house. Through the open door, Kildare could see the street empty of men, and watch the four saddled horses brought.

It had grown very hot in the top story of the house. The smoke had thickened, and the crackling noise of burning wood was very close to them.

And so they started down the stairs, sword in hand, all four of them.

"I'm to run ahead and show you the way from Panama!" whispered the girl to Kildare, as she jogged down the steps in front of the rest.

"Where's the boy from?" called Morgan instantly.

"You can throw a scrap of a negro lad into the bargain, can't you?" demanded Kildare angrily. "He'll show us out from Panama."

"Where's the girl?" demanded Morgan.

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"Where's Ines Heredia? Unless she's turned over to me, not a man of you will—"

"Is there no shame in you, Morgan?" demanded Kildare. "Do you want me to drag her to you with my own hands? She's hiding herself upstairs—and heaven forgive you if you find her."

"If she hid herself in the eye of a needle—still I'd find her," cried Morgan, as the shaggy-headed little blackamoor went past him down the hall.

And as the four men followed, Morgan held out his hand. The three remaining jewels were dropped into it; then Morgan ran up the stairs.

In front of the house, Kildare saw that the street was fairly cleared. A number of the curious buccaneers stood at a little distance, leaning on their muskets. Others had turned to the pillaging of the neighboring houses, and at this moment Kildare saw a Spaniard run from a doorway and try to escape across the street, while behind him appeared a buccaneer who stood in the doorway, laughing, raising his musket carelessly to his shoulder.

The gun spoke. The Spaniard leaped into the air with a scream and then fell forward on his face. He had been shot through one leg and he used the other to kick himself around in circles until the buccaneer came out and took him by the hair of the head, leaning to question him.

The screaming of the man flew into the ears of Kildare: "I have no money! I have no hidden treasure! For the mercy of God, let me live! I have nothing! I am poor!"

THE buccaneer merely laughed and seemed to enjoy a sweet music.

And Kildare told himself that he had brought this wretchedness on the city of Panama!

He remembered the long agony of the work in the galley and the treatment of the starved galley slaves before some of the nausea left his mind.

Then he was mounting the saddle with the rest of the party while the noble Lady Ines of the proud family of Heredia trotted down the street ahead of them to show them the way. Kildare could have laughed as he got his horse into a canter. Two or three of the buccaneers let off their muskets into the air with shouts of anger as they saw the Indian escaping in the midst of this escort, but all four were at a gallop, overtaking bare-legged Lady Ines as she scampered through the dust, when a frightful voice began to bawl and roar from the upper window of the burning house which they had just left.

Kildare, glancing back, saw Henry Morgan leaning from the window cursing in a dreadful passion, while Jimmy Green danced up and down the window sill and shook his white-bearded face at the fugitives.

"Kill them!" yelled Henry Morgan. "Catch them and burn them! They've cheated me! Me! They've cheated Henry Morgan! Catch them and catch the negro lad. It's Ines Heredia, that's worth five thousand pounds in ransom money. Do you hear? Catch them, fools, and I'll burn them inch by inch!"

Kildare, as his horse began to run, reached out and caught up Ines. She jumped so that one foot was placed on his and so she was suddenly behind his saddle; her sooty, slender hands were strained about him.

Louis d'Or at this moment had a tremendous fall, for as the buccaneers hastened to put in a volley before the group should escape around the corner of the street, one of the bullets whistled through the hair of Kildare's head; and another struck the horse of the Frenchman dead.

Padraic More pulled him up; Louis d'Or ran at the side of More with gigantic strides, hanging onto the stirrup leather.

But that was very bad. Each of the two horses had double work to do, and behind them were coming whole troops of the pirates mounted on the best that could be found in Panama and anxious to make this capture.

Five thousand pounds of ransom money? That was enough to make hearts very great

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indeed! And Henry Morgan himself would join the hue and cry as soon as he could get himself into a saddle.

Kildare, looking over his shoulder, saw the black, smiling face of his lady and had a silly desire to laugh; then he looked farther back to the rush of the horsemen who were coming in pursuit and his heart sickened. The horse that carried him already was beginning to labor, and Louis d'Or pulled back more and more heavily against the stirrup-leather to which he clung. This could not last long.

Kildare swung his horse to the right down an alley thick with rolling smoke and saw Louis d'Or, as he ran, clumsily leap at full speed a great burning timber that lay in the path.

They came on into an open square where he saw a number of men on horseback formed in a sort of hollow square and struggling to press through a crowd of buccaneers who beset them.

THIS was the last remnant of the Spanish defense, striving only to escape from the doomed city onto the green savannahs outside it. They seemed to have a very slight chance of success because every moment saddles were being emptied by the fire of the buccaneers or by the mighty strokes of the pirates as they pressed in hand to hand. But however slight might be the Spanish hope, it was better than that of the four with Kildare.

He cried to Padraic More: "They have to be our friends. We have to make their party ours. Ride to them, Pat! Charge through that big knot of the Brothers of the Coast!"

He had drawn his own slender sword as he spoke while Padraic More pulled out his machete and Louis d'Or unsheathed the length of his great cut-and-thrust rapier. The Indian, pushing his horse to the front, poised his spear to either cast or thrust with it. Then, four abreast, they struck the thickest knot of the buccaneers with a shout.

The surprise helped them. The flashing play of the lance and the three swords did the rest. Every bit of their steel was running blood as the buccaneers sprang right and left from this sudden destruction.

And the Spaniards, taking new heart and strength out of this unexpected reinforcement, charged in their turn and made the whole ragged, unordered mass of the pirates rush back. Kildare instantly had the girl in one of the empty saddles. Louis d'Or, springing onto another horse, became a different man at once and sent his shout through the fight.

At a trot the column worked across the remainder of the square, always keeping in good formation around the core of the party where a certain white-headed old man rode with half a dozen ladies of the town.

The rank and file of the soldiers were down or scattered; here was the last handful of the gentry of Panama trying to make good the escape of their women; and they fought like so many heroes. Many of them were wounded already; many a dead man had dropped from the ranks; but still there remained a fighting spirit that held them all together to make this final stroke for liberty.

In the confusion that followed the charge of the four, the entire column managed to surge across the square and so pass into the smoking mouth of a narrow street on the farther side.

The fumes were almost as deadly as the swords of the buccaneers. Kildare had to hold his head down and strain his breath through his teeth, but still he was choking.

But he and Louis d'Or and More, together with three of the Spaniards, made the rearguard which turned back and charged time and again into the faces of Morgan's men.

Their work was so sharp that the buccaneers began to draw back; but then Morgan himself appeared. Kildare recognized his great voice, husky as the cry of a sea-bird. Then he saw the burly pirate come charging through the fog with Jimmy Green hanging to the rear of the saddle.

A round dozen of the pirates closed at once behind their chief and gave weight

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to his attack. Others were ready to pour after so soon as the first impression was made on the defenders.

Kildare, looking at the befogged faces of the building left and right, where yellow heads of flame kept thrusting out of windows and roaring up the wooden sides, felt that a scene in hell might be much like this. Then, stifling and choking, he shouted to his companions to meet charge with charge. They did so. Man to man they met the mounted buccaneers.

THAT was an ideal encounter for the long arm and the heavy sword of Louis d'Or. At the first shock he drove the rapier like a spear through the naked breast of a Brother of the Coast. The man dropped like a sack from his saddle and lay sizzling, unmoving, across a pair of burning timbers. Then with edge and point Louis d'Or made a havoc.

Kildare had only one purpose, and that was to get at the brutal Morgan and end this battle once for all.

In a moment he was at his man, his light-weight needle of steel engaging the heavy cutlass. Afoot or horseback, he never had fought against an overmastering fury such as that which possessed Morgan. The man was irresistible. His heavy cutlass danced like a wooden sword in his hand, and he used his breath not for fighting only, but to curse Kildare, rally his men, and shout to Lady Ines that in five minutes he would have her and then hold her to the end of his days.

The terrible strokes of Morgan's blade Kildare took on the flimsy steel of his sword with consummate skill and kept striving for an opening through which he might be able to slide the bright little gleam of steel into the throat or the breast of Morgan.

And Morgan himself, feeling the danger, raging as he found his heaviest blows turned right and left by the uncanny craft of Kildare, began to yell to his men to rescue him before he was murdered. For there was no more shame in Morgan than there was mercy.

At last, when Kildare had missed the throat of the pirate by a hair's breadth, Morgan took a new target, and with one stroke clove the head of Kildare's horse.

Down it dropped, and Ivor Kildare lay pinned beneath it, helpless, with Morgan rushing in to finish the good work, yelling like a demon. He met at once the wide-bladed machete of Padraic More and the long rapier of Louis d'Or. They, reining their horses close to their fallen friend, now fought for his life and would not give back; and then Luis, the Indian, leaping down from his horse, helped Kildare to extricate himself from the limp weight of the fallen horse.

The smoke was less stifling, here close to the ground. The wits of Kildare recovered as he gained a breath or two of clean air. That song of the swords and the dim lightning of them above him helped him to recover, also, from the shock of the fall, and with the strength of Luis to assist, he was quickly on his feet.

A dismounted buccaneer sprang at him that instant. Kildare stabbed him through the face, and stepped quickly back to jerk his sword free from the bone of the skull in which it had lodged the point.

That backward, sudden step saved his life, for Morgan had found a chance to try a hearty stroke at the head of his enemy; the edge of the dripping blade whirred before the very tip of Kildare's nose.

He leaped in to strike a counter, catching the bridle of the horse to help himself forward. So, jumping clear of the ground, he drove the whole length of his rapier straight through the body of Henry Morgan.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FIGHTING CHANCE.

THROUGH the glimmer of fire and the gloom of smoke, the buccaneers right and left saw that stroke and uttered such howls as though the steel had pierced their own bodies.

Henry Morgan, pitching far back in the

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saddle, reeled and tumbled out of it, while the ape, Jimmy Green, leaped down on the prostrate body.

Here Luis the Indian, to make the fall of the buccaneer chief a certainty, ran in and struck with his spear. The blade should have gone straight through the throat of Morgan; instead, Jimmy Green by a sudden chance put himself right in the way of the stroke. He received a frightful wound, and as he screamed out in an agony, Morgan sat up and caught the bleeding body of Jimmy Green in his arms.

To the bewilderment of Kildare, the buccaneer actually staggered to his feet, shouting: "I'm only pinked through the shoulder, boys. It's a scratch. But they've murdered Jimmy Green and my luck with him! In at them—*hai*, Wilcox, Swain, Peters, Kennedy, Van Bloch, La Farge—charge 'em home! They've slaughtered poor Jimmy Green and now the devil will forget us! Charge!"

He tried to lead the way, but the rest did not follow. The work of Kildare and Louis d'Or and More, and of three or four of the Spaniards of the rearguard had been so hot that the buccaneers began to prefer to go about their work of looting Panama before it burned.

They held off, and finally a pair of them caught Morgan by the shoulders and drew him back. He began to curse them in a frantic voice, and all the while poor Jimmy Green lay against the breast of his master with his skinny arms clinging to the neck of Henry Morgan. Those arms now lost their hold and dropped; and Kildare knew that the strange little ape was dead. No human death could have touched him much more.

Half strangled by the smoke, singed by the fire, he turned, caught another horse, and soon the whole party had broken out of the narrows of that burning street. Behind them, to bar the way to pursuit, a house pitched across the lane in flames with a great uproar of rising flames and of breaking timbers.

Other buildings were staggering to a fall and went down after the party had passed. The very soil seemed on fire before they issued from the smoke of the town to the wide green of the savannah, with a blue, stainless sky arched above it.

Before them they had the battlefield with dead men lying scattered in small heaps, in scattering groups—and in one place a line of Spaniards lay out on the ground shoulder to shoulder, just as a volley from the buccaneers had struck that infantry and mowed it down.

There were voices of the wounded on every side, some groaning, sick with their wounds, others wailing for water. Some of the poor fellows came dragging themselves towards the party, holding out their hands for help and trailing the crimson of their blood over the trampled grass.

For already, hardly a mile behind them, they could see a small party of mounted men leaving the town and taking after them. They looked hardly greater in numbers than the Spaniards, but there would be no comparison in the fighting efficiency of the buccaneers. They might have been beaten off in the narrows of a burning street, but with an open chance to get at their game, they would pull down the Spanish as dogs might worry rabbits.

Louis d'Or drew close to Kildare, saying: "We keep Morgan's men at the same distance from us, constantly, Tranquillo; but even if we get away from them, we'll be left in the hands of the Spaniards, and they may have something to say to us, eh? How would we be able to answer their questions, Tranquillo? And once we are found out, we'll have a bit of Spanish justice!"

Kildare nodded. "We'll drift away from 'em," he said. "Are your pistols loaded? Pat, are your guns ready? We may have to do a little fighting before the Spaniards let us part from them."

MORE merely grinned and patted the big, clumsily curving butt of a horse pistol that protruded from the leather saddle holsters. With no more ado they veered away from the course of

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the Spaniards, taking a line to the right of the main body.

They hardly had opened up a space of ground before the white-headed commander of that lucky band called out an order and half a dozen of the gentry cantered their horses towards Kildare's band.

The leader, saluting with a wave of the hand, said: "The noble knight, Vasco da Herta, wishes to know why you will withdraw? Our strength now is in keeping together, all of us."

Kildare answered tersely: "Tell Sir Vasco that we honor him for his wisdom and thank him for his help; but now that we're in the open, fast riding will save our skins better than any amount of numbers. We are English—two of us—and Englishmen are never safe in Spanish hands in this part of the world. We've been taught that."

"By whom?" asked the other, haughtily.

"By the Spaniards we've found," said Kildare.

The Spaniard laid his armed hand on the hilt of his sword.

"Vasco da Herta has ordered me to bring you with your will or against your will!" he declared.

"If you can afford to stop and fight while Morgan's men are coming at your heels," said Kildare, "start the game and welcome. Our pistols are loaded, and we'll promise you some empty saddles to commence with."

The emissary started at Kildare, glanced hastily about him at his tired companions—every one of them carried a wound of one sort or another—and then gritted his teeth.

"We shall see what happens!" he declared, and wheeling his horse about, galloped back to his main party with his five men following him more slowly.

Kildare kept his men at a steady trot, gradually opening more and more distance between his group and those of da Herta. He saw the messenger arrive, and saw some of the excited Spaniards handle their muskets and pistols as though they would open fire at once. But there were backward glances at the buccaneers, also, and the sight of these seemed to turn the scales in the favor of peace.

They held their original course, but Louis d'Or said to Kildare: "If they meet us again, we'll pay red for this bit of talk, Tranquillo."

"Who is Vasco da Herta?" asked Kildare of the girl.

"The oldest man in Panama—and the richest," said the girl, "and the wisest, and the most cruel. He was the judge that I had to see and bribe before you could be sent to the galleys. Otherwise, he would have had you all hanged."

"Would it be safe for us to join them?" asked Kildare.

"Every Englishman seems like a buccaneer to the people of Panama today," she answered. "When the wounds of these men begin to grow cold and ache; when they build their first fire in the forest and think about the homes that have been burned behind them—then they will begin to look at you, Ivor, and remember that you are an Englishman. And if they ever discover that you have been called Tranquillo—" She paused.

"Do you hear what she says?" said Kildare to his two friends.

"She talks straight as a musket shoots," said the Irishman.

But Louis d'Or said nothing at all. He had fallen into a dream as he stared, constantly, at the face of the girl. And in fact the smudging of her skin had not destroyed her beauty. It gave a strange brightness to her eyes and to her smile; and she was continually smiling. Even when she looked back at the clouds of smoke which were blowing from off the ruins of the famous city of Panama, she still could smile.

"You are not afraid?" said Kildare to her.

"Tomorrow, perhaps. But I don't think so, ever. I have enough happiness now to fill me forever."

And she touched her mouth as though to tell him that happiness had ascended

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that far, and this was what kept her smiling.

THEY reached the top of a wooded hill and paused there. The wind had fallen, and the smooth waters of Panama Bay flamed under the westering sun. Behind them lay the pleasant green of the open savannah as far as the fumes of the dying city. Ahead of them rolled the tumult, the darkness, the broken ways or the solid jungle of the forest.

Flocks of brilliant birds, chacalacas, parrots and paraqueets, currasows and guans, were whirling over the tops of the trees; and now the bats came out with their dodging flight and wavered through the air. It would soon be night. It was night already in the forest.

"What can we do?" asked Kildare. "Speak up and make opinions!"

The Irishman said: "Steal down to the sea, wait for our chance, capture the first fishing boat that beaches, or the first periagua that we can surprise and capture. Then sail out to sea. Run aboard one of those neat little frigates that ply between Panama and the south, and so sail home to England."

Louis d'Or laughed. "Shall we man a boat with four pairs of hands around the storms of the Horn?" he asked.

"We'll put part of the Spaniards adrift," said Padraic More, "and the other part—half a dozen of them—we'll keep to help us work the ship. And that's how we'll make the voyage as trim and easy as you please."

"Vote," said Kildare.

"A big idea, not to be tried," said Louis d'Or.

"I think we could travel through the forest to the Northern Sea," said the girl.

"We'll have to try that rather than Pat's idea of the captured canoe, the frigate for a prize, and the voyage around the Horn," said Kildare. "But—have you ever traveled through the jungle, except with a hundred men to make the way safe, or cut a path through the rankness?"

She shook her head. "The vileness of it would stifle you; the heat would beat you down; and the despair would kill you, also," said Kildare.

She said: "Ivor, I have lost my father's people, my mother's fortune, and all my friends. But still I am happy. Do you think that the forest will be able to frighten me, then?"

"Forward, then," said Kildare. "We have a fighting chance to win through to England, and fighting chances are all that we're used to."

CHAPTER XXVII.

SURRENDER.

THEY turned the horses loose on the edge of the forest and entered it where a stream ran down towards the sea. The Mosquito would be able to guide them a certain amount by instinct in case the stream failed to follow the northern direction which they wanted in order to come within view of the Atlantic at last.

Silently they began that journey, stumbling over the rocks and roots at the edge of the water, and sometimes slipping into it up to their knees. It cost them half an hour to cover a half mile which was like climbing a ruined stairs. It was hard work but it was easy compared with what lay before them. And Kildare, critically watching the knees of the girl, saw that they never sagged with fatigue. She was as wiry as a boy.

They were at the end of their half mile when there was a sudden twanging of bowstrings, and a flight of arrows whirred about them. One bolt clipped past the very face of Kildare. Another actually struck and shattered on the hilt of the Frenchman's big sword.

And for one horrible moment it seemed to Kildare that an arrow had driven straight through the slender body of Ines Heredia. It merely had whipped through the loose of her shirt.

They leaped for cover and got to it before a second volley of arrows crackled

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against the rocks or thudded into the tree trunks. And then a loud yelling rang through the forest all around them.

Kildare, the girl, and Luis, all found shelter behind one huge trunk.

But Luis, standing erect, was calling out in a strange tongue, talking rapidly.

A babble of voices answered, speaking from all sides, so that it was clear an Indian hunting party had hemmed them in.

"They are Cuma Indians," said the Mosquito. "But I know their tongue. I have told them that you are not Spaniards, whom they should hate, but Englishmen whom they should love."

The rest of the voices died away and a single man began to call out.

"He wants to know if you are traveling alone or if you are in advance of a large number," said Luis.

"Tell them a whole army is coming after us," said the Irishman, prone behind a big rock. "Tell them that if they put a hand on us, the army that's coming will pull down the forest over their heads."

"No," said Kildare. "Tell them the truth. In the jungle, one friendly Indian is worth a hundred blundering, starving whites. Tell them that we are four whites and yourself—all hunted by the Spanish."

He added: "Ines, try to wash the black off your face and body."

She made a twist of grass obediently, and began to scrub, and he helped her. The black came off unwillingly by degrees. He rubbed sand into her hair after it had been wet, and with new scrubbings and rinsings, it began to grow bright.

Luis had finished his speech before this and been replied to. The parley still lasted through slow minutes until Luis reported: "There is a great chief talking to me. His name is Lacenta. He says that all the jungle and all the seacoast for three days' journey belongs to him. He says that the white men never have done him good and have done him much evil. But if you have presents to give him, he will take you to his village and give you guides who will take you to the Northern Sea."

The sun, unseen, had set, and the swift, tropical darkness rushed through the forest about them while Luis was speaking. Ines Heredia pressed suddenly close to Kildare, trembling.

"We can give him a pair of pistols and the powder and lead for charging them," said Kildare to Luis. "Tell him that."

The rapid voice of Luis offered the reply; there was a cheerful shout in answer.

"He agrees," said Luis.

"Will it be safe to go with them?" asked Kildare.

"Father," said Luis, "who can tell what the Cumas will do? They have been hurt many times by the white men. Perhaps they will be able to remember some of your faces, and what you have done against them in the past. And then if one of you is remembered, all of you are dead."

"Is that all you can say?" murmured Kildare.

"That is all, father."

"Do you hear, Pat? Do you hear, Louis d'Or?" asked Kildare.

"I hear," said the Frenchman. "But the blackness here is choking me like ink. Let's make the bargain and go on with them."

So that surrender—it could hardly be called anything else—was agreed on. The shout with which the Indians greeted the news showed that they regarded it as a triumph. Presently noises approached them.

Something glimmered, then a torch flared with a smoky light—another and another.

Kildare, half dazzled by that unexpected shining among the trees, gradually made out the gleam of naked bodies approaching slowly.

They were horrible things to see, the faces as red as though the skin had been flayed from them, and the bodies black, spotted with brightest yellow in daubs and long streaks.

They wore a cloth about the loins, but that was all. They came up with arrows on the string and javelins poised.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.

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The Men Who Make The Argosy

Writer of Sports Fiction

BORN in Northfield, Massachusetts, in 1903. My mother was an actress, playing leads with Richard Mansfield, and my father was an opera singer. Most of my youth was spent in Europe, following my father around from one opera house to another, my mother having given up the theater after her marriage. I went to school in England for a while, and later I attended a military academy in this country. I graduated from Columbia University in 1924.

JUDSON P. PHILIPS

From the very beginning I had wanted to be a writer; and I began to write while I was still in college, selling my first story to ARGOSY about 1922. It was, incidentally, the first story I had ever tried to sell. From that time on, I never stopped writing fiction, though I have held down a number of curious jobs, ranging from newspaper sports writing to movie acting, and even to managing a prizefighter.

I have always been keenly interested in sports of all kinds; in my schooldays I played football and baseball, but I have since settled down to being a frenzied golfer. My golf game, when I have the time to practice and really devote a little time to it, is fairly good. I have belonged to four or five clubs in the last ten years, and at one time or another have been club champion at each of them. I once qualified for the National Amateur.

At the moment I am living in Woodstock, N. Y., famous as an artists' colony, but also the home of many musicians and several well-known writers. What time I have left over from writing and golfing I spend as associate editor and part owner of the local weekly newspaper, in which I run a column on Art and Artists. (I know practically nothing about either!)

My wife is a playwright, and at the moment has a play in production which has been seen out of town the past summer, and by the time this appears will have opened on Broadway. Some day I hope to write for the theater myself, but until I can devote myself entirely to it over an extended period, that will have to wait.

Since ARGOSY was the first magazine in which I appeared as a professional writer, I get a special satisfaction whenever one of my stories appears in it. I hope ARGOSY readers get as much pleasure from reading them as I get from cashing the magazine's checks.

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Bedford-Jones Writes of His Story "Bowie Knife"

THE lost Bowie Mine of the San Saba country, north of San Antonio, is not a fiction. Rezin Bowie, who was Jim Bowie's brother and was also the inventor of the Bowie knife, had some of the ore from the deposit assayed in New Orleans. Tradition states that a few months before his death in the Alamo, Jim Bowie was organizing an expedition to recover the treasure of the Red Ochre Hills. The old Spanish workings appear to have been located in the vicinity of the present town of Menard, Texas.

The girl *Josefa* is taken from a character in real life, one Señora Candelaria, baptized Andrea. As "Madame Candelaria," the *señora* was for years a familiar figure in American San Antonio. She always maintained that she had held Jim Bowie's head in her lap when the Alamo was ravaged, and that the ball which gave him his first death-wound also scarred her chin. She died, a very old woman, in 1899. It is worthy of note that her pretensions found credit in many authoritative quarters.

The Alamo was the old mission called San Antonio de Valero, on the east side of the San Antonio River—or "about two gunshots" from the *presidio,* San Antonio de Bejar (or Bexar). It got its commonly accepted name by reason of a garrison of soldiers who hailed from the Pueblo del Alamo (the word means "cottonwood") in Mexico. With its barracks, etc., it covered something over three acres.

Why were reinforcements not sent to the relief of the Alamo? No men were available. Colonel Fannin, over a hundred miles away at Goliad, did start with cannon and three hundred men, but broke down; he could not cut his way through the strong Mexican column that halted, captured, and ultimately massacred, him and his men.

The Texas convention, meeting and bickering at distant San Felipe, was in utter confusion. A Mexican column sent against Matamoras, on the lower Rio Grande, had sidetracked the Alamo issue. Most of the settlers in the field, after San Antonio was captured in the preceding fall, had gone home and could not be rallied. Some thirty men rode seventy miles from Gonzales to join Travis, but they only swelled the bag.

Refugees, other than women, from the Alamo? Yes. Travis's Negro boy, Bowie's Negro boy and Mexican servant, were spared. And one man, Moses Rose, is said to have escaped shortly before the assault, the one person who did not choose to fight. A Mexican in the ranks, Brigidio Guerrero, hid during the massacre, and in 1878 was granted a pension by the county court.

Santa Anna later made this specious plea: "The obstinacy of Travis and his soldiers was the cause of their deaths, for not one would surrender." The number of bodies burned is variously estimated. Ramon Martinez Caro, who as Santa Anna's secretary recorded the casualties of both sides, wrote in 1837 of the Texan loss: "*No fueron más que los citados ciento ochenta y tres*"—"there were no more than the said one hundred and eighty-three." Santa Anna would have had it six hundred, whereas the Mexican casualties were

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about five hundred, possibly more.

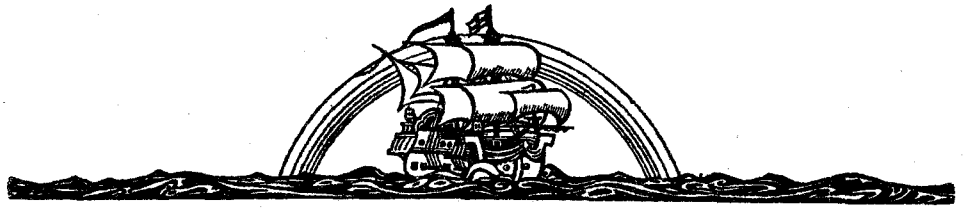
What became of the ashes of the dead? There are various accounts of their disposal; but Colonel Juan N. Seguin, an officer in the Texan cause and one of the messengers from the Alamo, wrote in March, 1889: "I collected the fragments and placed them in an urn, and buried it in the Cathedral of San Fernando, immediately in front of the altar." This was in 1837, according to his account. Whether true or not, nobody seems to know or care; but the Harrisburg (Texas) *Telegraph & Texas Register* of March 28, 1837, published another story of the disposal of the ashes:

> In conformity with an order from the general commanding the army at headquarters, Col. Seguin, with his command stationed at Bexar [San Antonio] paid the honors of war to the remains of the heroes of the Alamo. The ashes were found in three places. The two smallest heaps were carefully collected, placed in a coffin, neatly covered with black and having the names of Travis, Bowie and Crockett engraved on the inside of the lid, and were carried to Bexar and placed in the parish church, where the Texian flag, a rifle and a sword were laid upon it, for the purpose of being accompanied by the procession, which was formed at 3 o'clock on the 25th of February. The honors to be paid were announced in orders of the preceding evening, and by the tolling knell from daybreak to the hour of interment. At 4 o'clock the procession moved from the church.
>
> The procession passed through the principal street of the city, crossed the river, passed through the principal avenue on the other side, and halted at the place where the first ashes had been gathered. The coffin was then placed upon the spot and three volleys of musketry were discharged by one of the companies. The procession then moved to the second spot, whence part of the ashes in the coffin had been taken, and there the same honors were paid. The procession then proceeded to the principal spot and place of interment, where the graves had been prepared. The coffin had been placed upon the principal heap of ashes, when Col. Seguin delivered a short address in Spanish, followed by Major Western in English, and the ashes were buried.

As a matter of fact, nobody actually does know what took place in the Alamo after the last message went out. There were all sorts of stories, some of them fabulous. I myself have been over most of the ground of the story; and those who are interested can get their information where I got it—partly from word of mouth in San Antonio, partly from Potter's handbook on the Alamo, which is the standard authority, and partly from these other works:

Bancroft: "North Mexican States & Texas," Vol. II.—Wooten: "A Comprehensive History of Texas," which includes the amended and annotated work of Yoakum.—Chabot: "The Alamo."—Davis: "The Story of Texas Under Six Flags."—Crockett: "Life of Davy Crockett."—Bolton & Barker: "With the Makers of Texas."—De Shields: "Border Wars of Texas."—Garrison: "Texas, a Contest of Civilization."—Sabin: "Book of Border Battles."—Triplett: "Conquering the Wilderness."—Williams: "Sam Houston and the War of Independence in Texas."—And others of less importance. Locating good authorities on Texas is difficult; hence the above list of titles may be of service to others.

H. BEDFORD-JONES.



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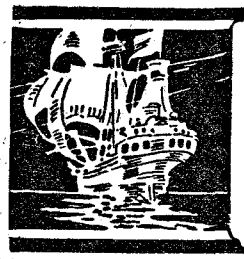

Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint

WITH this issue ARGOSY begins to publish "Bowie Knife," the story of Jim Bowie and the Alamo. It is of particular interest at this time, for the year 1936 will see the opening of the great Texas Centennial celebration.

No state in the Union has had a more spectacular or thrilling history than Texas. It was the late Will Rogers who, during a trip through Texas back in January, 1935, wrote for his column in the newspapers: "When you want to read of excitement read the history of Texas. It's just mangy with romance. . . . Texas is having a big centennial next year and, while you're sorter planning your vacation, you want to come to our biggest State. . . . Sam Houston, the most colorful man in all American history, made this his arena. Yes, sir, brother, this is a State!"

But "Bowie Knife" is only the first of Bedford-Jones's stories of Texas. Sometime in January ARGOSY will begin "Texas Shall Be Free!" the story of Sam Houston, written by the same author.—We hope you will enjoy this fiction, based upon actual Texas history, as much as we have!

AN ARGOSY stowaway, admits

BURGETTE CAHOON

Please listen to praise from a kid still in school for your dime-a-ride ship. Almost like being a stowaway! I had intended to write sooner, in time to have a chance at a free subscription so my father would not have to pay the four dollars next year (as he has been doing for eighteen years now), but I could not decide what story was best. I believe "Lysander of Chios" and "War Declared!" and the *Firebrand* series led the rest.—But where are *Gillian Hazeltine* and *Zorro?*

Stick to your four serials a week!

Monona, Ia.

DAILY traveling companion to

(MISS) EVELYN M. GRENTZER

One thing I say every morning before leaving for work is "Where's this week's ARGOSY?" and around I rush to locate it. Many times I have to solace myself with the week-before ARGOSY because some other member of the family had it the night before and left it gosh-knows-where. I carry the ARGOSY to and from work every day. It's a good companion to me, too. I read it on the bus and in the street car, also at noon. But the tough part about this is that in two or three days I have it read from cover to cover and the rest of the week I grab it just from force of habit, then I look at the pictures or cover page. I have read the ARGOSY for the last twelve years and it has become a weekly routine to buy an ARGOSY. And boy, how I do squeeze those dimes together! Today's the 13th, but who says 13's are unlucky, anyway?

Cleveland, Ohio.

MR. ROSCOE contributes a few new ideas to

VERNER TOWNLEY

The best story published since January 1, 1935, in my opinion, is "War Declared!" by Theodore Roscoe, for the simple reason that he proves that, in these days of increasing nationalism, consequent expansion and armament expenditures, we ought to take a somewhat different view than that of the usual pacifist or member of an anti-war society.

No doubt there are many sincere persons who have always thought that war is solely the result

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of a moral decline. But the real cause of war, as Mr. Roscoe's story proves, lies in the world's economic structure and nowhere else.

I had never considered this side of the situation until I read "War Declared!" and by his fine presentation of this thesis, Roscoe proves that war is the inevitable result of any system of society in which private profit is the motivating force.

I consider Roscoe's story the best I have ever read, and whether or not this letter is considered for the prize contest, I would be pleased if you would send it to the author, just to see how close I come or how far I missed in my analysis of the story.

Versailles, Mo.

P. S. The writer is not a radical—not even a liberal. The above letter simply portrays his honest reactions.—I'm afraid Mr. Roscoe has started me to thinking! V. T.

SELDOM heard from, Philippines gold miners such as

S. E. LICHKNOCK

I am writing my first letter to an editor, and it takes a darn good magazine to make me do it. My hat's off to ARGOSY for its grand all-round stories, and especially to W. C. Tuttle, the man with the inimitable sense of humor. His stories are liable to make even a dead man laugh. "The Sherlock of Sageland" was great, but "The Spirit of the Thing" was positively a riot, and well worth while reading over. How a man can combine four raring cowboys, a bull, a phonograph, and a whole circus into so much fun is beyond me. But leave it to Tuttle, the man who could make Buster Keaton's sour face turn into a Joe E. Brown laugh.

Many of your authors would find this spot where I live an ideal setting for a story. It's the prospector's paradise, for there is supposed to be more gold in these hills than was ever taken out of Alaska. Millions of pesos in bullion are produced monthly by the different mills. It is also the only place in the Philippines where the homes are furnished with fireplaces. Being 5,000 feet above sea level, the temperature is quite low at any time of day or night. Furthermore, it's the only place in the P. I. where American pines grow in abundance.

Baguio, Philippine Islands.

SUGGESTIONS for *Henry* in the movies come from

L. M. BRODBECK

Quite often stories printed in the ARGOSY are used later in the movies. I would like to see W. C. Tuttle's *Henry* stories reproduced in moving pictures, with an all-star cast. W. C. Fields ought to play *Henry*, and Slim Summerville, *Oscar Johnson*. I believe that if the *Henry* stories were reproduced in movies with those two stars playing they would be the most outstanding pictures of the year. If it had not been for the untimely death of Will Rogers, he would have made an ideal *Judge Van Treece*.

Thanks a lot for returning to your old system of a new serial starting each week and one ending each week. That makes one more anxious to get the new issue, and keeps one more steadily interested.

Woodbury, Mich.

A FEW brickbats tagged with the name

J. H. NOONAN

I have been promising myself the pleasure of writing you for some time, but other more important but less pleasant matters have intervened. I have been a regular reader of your magazine for—let's see—four years; and I think it is undoubtedly the outstanding periodical of its class.

For the best story of 1935, so far, I nominate "Lysander of Chios," by F. V. W. Mason, who has yet to write a poor story. "Lysander of Chios" had absorbing interest and historical accuracy, was well written, and at the same time was absolutely free of that high-school conception of the way in which the ancient Greeks expressed themselves. It has always been my contention that the conversation in historical novels should be as natural to the reader as it is to the character in the story. Mason always succeeds in making his dialogue sound this way, and for that reason his historical stuff is head-and-shoulders over that of any other writer.

So much for the bouquets. Now for a few brickbats. To begin with, let us consider Theodore Roscoe. He is, by common consent, the most vivid writer you have. He can take a hackneyed idea, such as the one in the "Kingdom of Hell," insert a few modern twists, add a lot of swell descriptive writing, and produce a story that holds your attention from start to finish. Also, as a novelette or short story writer, he is unbeatable (witness "Voodoo Express," "The Port of Missing Heads," and many others). But he is in his element only when writing in the first person, and he is slipping—sad but true. "A Grave Must Be Deep!" was fair; but "War Declared!" was poor. It had an inescapable air of unreality; besides, Mr. Roscoe, weren't *John Keats* and Her Majesty a bit formal with each other, considering the circumstances and the fact, to put it mildly, that they were actually pretty well acquainted with each other in "The Kingdom of Hell"?

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Then there is A. Merritt. He turns out the best fantastic stories you print, and his work shows an encyclopedic knowledge of folk-lore and mythology, painstaking accuracy, excellent use of English, and a deep understanding of human nature. But his last effort, "Creep, Shadow!" was far below the standard he set in "The Moon Pool," "The Face in the Abyss," "Burn, Witch, Burn!" and others. There was an indefinable something missing.

While on the subject of fantastics, we might consider briefly Murray Leinster, Otis Adelbert Kline and George F. Worts, all of whom have contributed stories during the last year or so. Leinster reads, to my mind, like an extremely technical professor of physics describing a trip through the Metropolitan Museum. Kline's interplanetary stories are irreproachable, but his character, *Jan,* seems too much like somebody from Oliver Optic to suit me. Worts, and I now have particular reference to "The Monster of the Lagoon," reads like a mixture of a Sunday supplement scientific article and the Rover Boys in the South Seas. *Sam Shay* should have stuck to the hunt for his father, and *Professor Bryce* should have stayed in his laboratory. Incidentally, speaking of Mr. Worts, I suggest that in future all *Gillian Hazeltine* stories be subtitled "Or 'The Bar Association's Nightmare.'"

In my opinion, Hulbert Footner, creator of *Mme. Storey,* the woman detective, should have kept editing the Calgary newspaper on which, I believe, he started his career. For the sake of the reading public, anyway.

That, I think, ends the brickbats—and also this letter. Except that I should like to see another mystery novel by F. V. W. Mason (remember "The Fort Terror Murders"?) and a return of Evan Evans.

I realize that this letter is far longer than any "letter to the editor" should be, but I had to get it off my chest. I promise it won't happen again!

Ottawa, Ont.

SPELLED both ways in records, is our answer to

CHASE PULSIFER

I have been a reader of your ARGOSY since about 1886 (as near as I can recall). At that time a large size weekly at six cents, news-stand price, I walked two miles and back to get it. About 1890 I helped distribute the first prospectus of *Munsey's Magazine,* and have stayed with your publication from Maine to California, throughout the rise and fall, or absorption, of *Cavalier, Allstory, Electric, Railroad.* If you hadn't put out consistently satisfactory magazines, you couldn't have held so many old timers so long. Thanks for many years of good stories!

I have read with interest the quasi-historical "High Treason," by John Wilstach, and I note that the historical names of "Tryon" and "Knyphausen" (See Webster-International) are spelled "Tyron" and "Knyhausen." The first appears many times in all three parts; the last once. Once might be a typographical error, but many times may be intentional.

I am curious to know if Wilstach, in his documentary researches, has discovered real authority for the change, or if he uses fictional license—or even if the spelling is due to the uncertain education of the times (similar to the various spellings of "Shakespeare").

In any event, it was a good story!

Yuma, Ariz.

APOLOGIES to Hervey Allen from

JAMES C. GRIEVE, JR.

Now and again—certainly not often enough—we read a story and file it away for future enjoyment quite unconscious of certain incidents in it. A rather gruesome enjoyment sometimes, perhaps, when a word picture suddenly pops into our mind's eye months later.

I have just read such a story. I believe I shall remember it for a long time. I do not believe this story was ever reviewed in any of our magazines or newspapers. It should have been. I am thinking of Theodore Roscoe's "War Declared!" A superlative novel. A novel charged with drama, and illustrated with numberless word pictures. Excellent—nay, *perfect*—characterization. It has everything. With apologies to Hervey Allen, who wrote "Anthony Adverse," he never conjured up or wrote a more dramatic word picture than this—

"A breeze from somewhere stirred the tangled mass of his [Anton Stehli's] unbowed gray hair. . . . Just before the blast of the rifles a white dove fluttered down and perched on Stehli's shoulder. . . . The dove's head was shattered, too."

Or—

"The body of a naked man, his yellow hide spattered a harlequin red, dangled in the wind under a lamp post. . . . Not far from this impromptu gallows stood a woman who might have been the man's wife. A fair-haired toddler clung tugging at her skirts in an attempt to move her away. . . . Behind the woman an Esperenchman in black cloak and broad-brimmed hat, an artist with a canvas landscape hugged under arm, leaned on the pitted bridge rail and contemplated this drama of modern civilization without sympathy."

Or—

—But you read the story. What is more, you *published* it. *Thanks!*

Beebe Plain, Vt.

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Of Interest to You!

WHAT do you consider the best story (of any length) published in ARGOSY since June 1, 1935? For the twelve post cards or letters from readers which name the best reasons why this or that story stands out above all others the magazine will give twelve full, yearly subscriptions. Literary style or skill will not count, for what the editors want to know is exactly what stories readers like best, and *why*.

Letters selected will be published from week to week, but *not all letters published will be rewarded with subscriptions.*

Your letter must reach us not later than January 1, 1936. Address it to The Editor, ARGOSY Magazine, 280 Broadway, New York City.

LOOKING AHEAD!

MIDNIGHT TAXI

Take our word for it—this is without doubt the best novel ever written by the man who wrote "East River" for ARGOSY. If anything, he knows taxi driving even better than he knows tunnel building. This is the story of a taxi driver who was a government sleuth. Seven parts, by BORDEN CHASE

TEST FLIGHT

A magnificently exciting air novelette—a long one—by a writer whose name will be familiar to older readers of the magazine, FREDERICK C. PAINTON

THE TUBA PITCHER

The rib-cracking story of a mysterious baseball player; a short story by HOWARD MARSH

COMING TO YOU IN NEXT WEEK'S ARGOSY—OCTOBER 12

SPECIAL NOTE

With this issue, ARGOSY begins to print the *last series of ten coupons.* The demand for original black and white drawings has been so great that our supply is almost exhausted. IN ORDER TO GET YOUR DRAWING YOU MUST BEGIN TO CLIP YOUR COUPONS WITH THIS ISSUE OF THE MAGAZINE

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DO you want an original black and white drawing, an illustration like those which appear on the inside pages of the magazine? Save ten *consecutive* coupons like the one attached, fill them in with the date (or description) of the ARGOSY cover which you have liked best, and mail the coupons to The EDITOR, ARGOSY Magazine, 280 Broadway, New York City. The artist will present you with a drawing. You may divide your votes among several covers, in any way you choose, or even cast all ten votes for a single cover. But the ten coupons must be *consecutive.*

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RODEO, a true-to-life account of the "professional cowboys"
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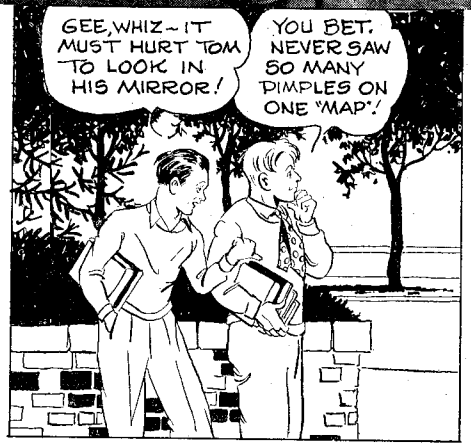
Hi there, PIMPLY FACE!"

t soon they changed this ugly nickname



TOM, I'VE BROUGHT YOU SOME FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST CAKES. PLEASE DO GIVE THEM—AND YOUR SKIN—A CHANCE!
OH, AW RIGHT, SIS—ANYTHING TO MAKE YOU QUIT NAGGING ABOUT IT!

TWO WEEKS LATER
FOR THE LOVE O'MIKE—IF IT ISN'T OLD PIMPLY FACE—IN DISGUISE!
SURE AS I'M BORN—WHAT HAPPENED?? HAVE TO START CALLING YOU "HANDSOME" NOW!

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—clears the skin

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YOU'LL LIKE THEIR MILDNESS TOO!

CAMELS DO NOT FRAZZLE MY NERVES OR UPSET MY CONDITION. AND THAT CAMEL TASTE IS JUST WHAT I WANT ... MILDNESS COUPLED WITH FULL, RICH FLAVOR!

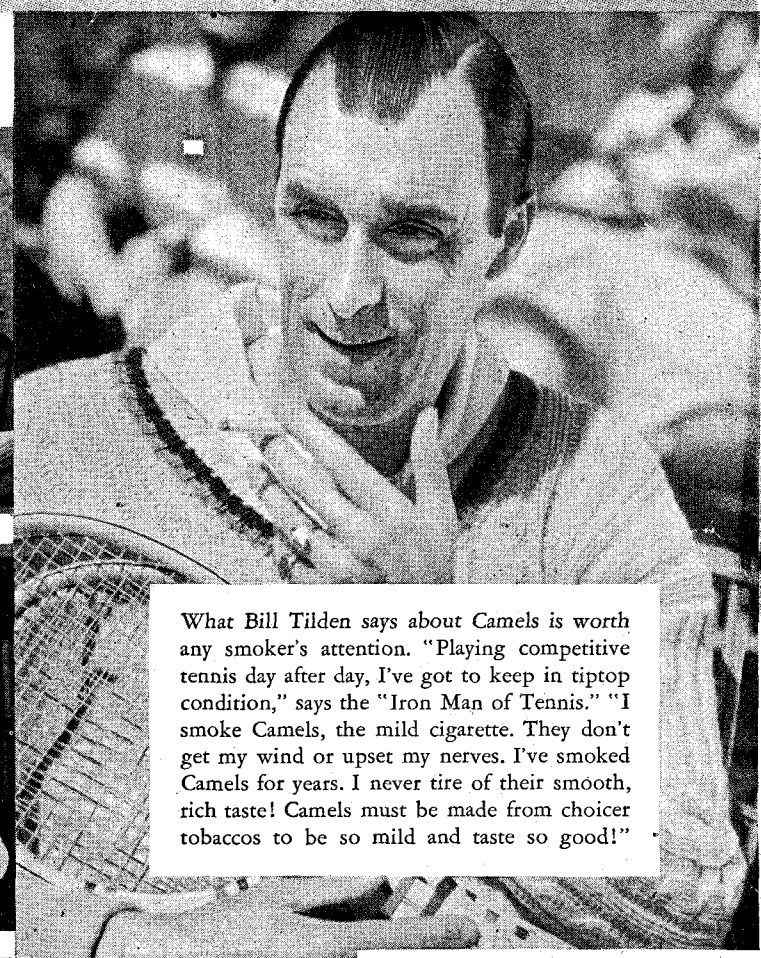
ACCOUNTANT—C. A. Petersen

LIFE'S MORE FUN WHEN YOU KEEP FIT! SO YOU SEE WHY I, TOO, SMOKE CAMELS. I'VE SMOKED THEM FOR AGES, AND NO MATTER HOW MANY I SMOKE, THEY DON'T AFFECT MY WIND

WRITER—Eileen Tighe

I FOLLOW TILDEN, SARAZEN, GEHRIG, AND THE OTHER SPORTS STARS IN SMOKING CAMELS. I SMOKE CAMELS STEADILY. THEY NEVER GET MY WIND

REPORTER—Dick Hungerford



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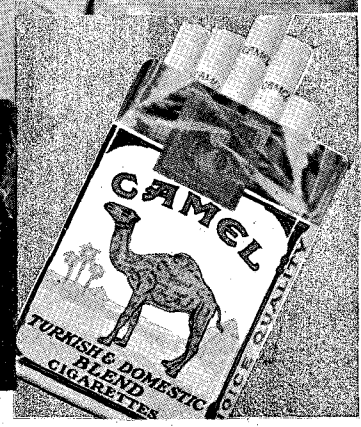

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● Camels are made from finer, MORE EXPENSIVE TOBACCOS —Turkish and Domestic— than any other popular brand.

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